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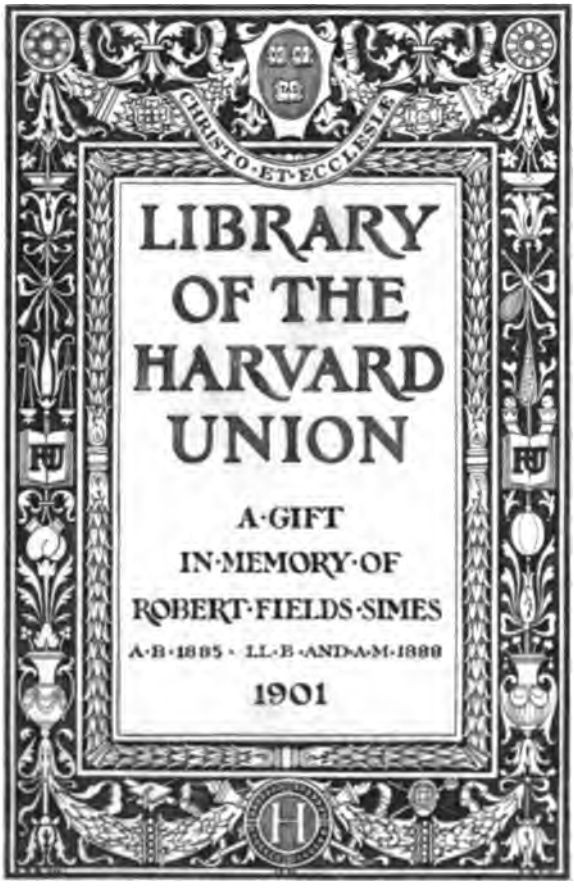

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THE BALKANS FROM WITHIN

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A SHOOTING PARTY.

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THE BALKANS FROM WITHIN

By
REGINALD WYON

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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1904

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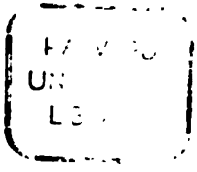

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PREFACE

COUNT GOLUCHOWSKI, replying recently to the pertinent question of a delegate, said that it is impossible to foresee all contingencies in the Balkans. The war now in progress in the Far East gives point to his remark, for it introduces additional complications, and lends to Balkan affairs a more immediately threatening aspect. One sign of the times is the candid decision of Austria-Hungary to send troops to Macedonia. There can be little doubt that secret treaties exist, and that, at the first sign of fighting, Austria will receive a European mandate to move. For this she is openly and busily preparing, but the first step—the complete occupation of the Sandjak of Novibazar—is likely to result in a serious surprise. I am fully convinced that the Albanians will see in the occupation of Mitrovitza a threat against their national independence. Indeed, the news from Albania at the moment of writing tells of serious fighting between the insurgents and their old friend Shemshi Pacha. The proposed reforms apparently do not meet with Albanian approbation, and the armed bands are signifying the same in their usual unmistakable manner.

The Scriptures testify abundantly that the lot of a prophet is not a happy one: to him often falls the portion of Micaiah,

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the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, with shrewd blows from those who desire the pleasant lie rather than the unpalatable truth. However, in spite of these terrifying instances, the student of Balkan affairs is not to be denied the pleasure of prophecy; though I admit that the continual insistence upon what is "going to happen" in the Near East becomes annoying to the average man, who loves a fight, and wishes in his heart of hearts during the weary weeks of prophecy and conjecture, that the war of words would cease and the war of weapons begin. On the other hand, the writer who continuously predicts a war is generally accused of striving to bring it about, and many indignant epithets are hurled at his unlucky head.

In some of the following pages I have argued that this year will see a blaze in the Balkans that will have far graver results than the conflict in the Far East. I cannot see how a war between Turkey and Bulgaria can be avoided. Hilmi Pacha's proposal to place round the whole Bulgarian frontier a cordon of sentries at intervals of not more than a hundred yards, with the corresponding supports and reserves, cannot fail to bring about an upheaval. The most trifling incident will set Turk and Bulgar at each other's throat. In the twinkling of an eye a dozen nations will find themselves directly or indirectly involved, and then will be seen the value of the secret treaties mentioned above. But enough of croaking.

The greater part of this volume is occupied with an endeavour to conjure up rough pictures of life amongst the sturdy and warlike inhabitants of certain Balkan States. These sketches

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represent travels which have occupied the last few years, and which, I hope, will occupy many a year to come—for there are few countries which offer so much of human interest and novelty as these on the threshold of the civilized world. The beauty of the glorious mountains of Rilo, the grandeur of the Albanian Alps, and the wildness of the rocky fastnesses of little Montenegro never fail of their fascination; moreover, the peasant of the Balkans, be he Albanian or Serb, Montenegrin or Bulgar, is hospitality personified, and his full-blooded energy is a pure delight to those who are weary of the Western detrimental. We are apt to judge these people harshly at times, and condemn them for actions of which they in their lonely homes know little or nothing. A sojourn in their midst is a revelation. For my part I love the Balkan people, and so I have tried in these pages to show them in their habit as they live, believing that the reader's comprehension of Balkan problems will be materially increased if he can be made to feel at home among the inhabitants of these remote and turbulent countries.

Many of the sketches found a temporary resting-place in the magazines, and I wish to thank the editors of *Blackwood's*, *Chambers's*, and *Temple Bar* for permission to republish contributions to their pages. Many thanks are also due to Mr. George Sampson for his assistance in preparing the volume for the press. Some errors may have crept into the text, and for these I beg the reader's indulgence, pleading in extenuation the distance between author and printing press.

I have met with much kindness from Prince Nicolas of

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Montenegro, as well as from General Petroff, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria. In Macedonia the consuls of various nations made life bearable during a trying time, and, in fact, without their support much of my work would have been impossible. For obvious reasons I refrain from mentioning the names of these brave and steadfast men; and I fervently trust that the gloomy fate which is ever before their eyes may finally be averted.

Lastly, I dedicate this book, with all respect, to the ashes of the Berlin Convention, which has brought so much misery and suffering to brave and innocent races, basely deserted by the very Powers who solemnly undertook to succour them. It is sad indeed when we see humanity and fairness sacrificed on the unholy altar of party politics. England, at any rate, should be above such things.

R. W.

VIENNA, *February*, 1904.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE vii

THE INSURGENT PROVINCES—

A FORECAST. I 1

A FORECAST. II 13

REMINISCENCES. I 23

REMINISCENCES. II 37

REMINISCENCES. III—THE TURKISH ARMY . . . 51

REMINISCENCES. IV—THE TURKISH ARMY (*continued*) . 63

WHAT I SAW IN MACEDONIA 75

A MORNING'S SIGHT-SEEING IN MONASTIR. . . . 95

UESKÜB'S DISSIPATION 105

FLORINA 111

BEARDING THE TURK 121

THE INSURGENTS I 137

THE INSURGENTS II 148

ACROSS THE BORDER—A CONTRAST 159

AT A BORDER BLOCKHOUSE 171

RILO AND RILO MONASTERY 177

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CONTENTS

PAGE

THE INSURGENT PROVINCES (*continued*)—

IN THE RILO MOUNTAINS 183

THE LIGHTER SIDE 195

MONTENEGRO—

AN EVENING IN THE MOUNTAINS 201

A BORDER TOWN 206

AT A CAFÉ IN CETINJE 211

PLAYFULNESS 216

A WALK IN THE MOUNTAINS 221

THE PRISONERS 226

MORNING ON THE LAKE OF SCUTARI 231

EVENING ON THE LAKE OF SCUTARI 237

OSTROG: THE ARRIVAL 242

OSTROG: AT THE SHRINE OF ST. VASILI 248

OSTROG: AMONG THE BOOTHS 254

OSTROG: DEDA 259

OSTROG: THE CHURCH MILITANT 264

THE SHEEP-LIFTERS 269

THE MORNING AFTER 275

ACROSS THE BORDER 279

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

MONTENEGRO (*continued*) PAGE

CHURCH PARADE 284

BORDER HEROISM 290

EASTERTIDE 296

THE CENTRAL PRISON OF MONTENEGRO 306

AT A CAFÉ IN PODGORICA 312

THE ROAD TO PLAVNICA 317

TO ŠAVNIK BY NIGHT 322

THE RIDE TO THE DURMITOR 328

CRNA JESERO 333

ŽABLJAK: THE KAPETAN'S WIFE 337

A MONTENEGRIN MOTHER 345

BLACK ANDRIJA 351

BORDER LIFE IN MONTENEGRO—

RUMOURS 359

CONCERNING A CONFERENCE 365

DEATH 371

REVENGE 375

PARTING SHOTS 381

"UPS AND DOWNS". 387

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CONTENTS

PAGE

ALBANIA—

INTRODUCTORY 397

THE RENDEZVOUS 401

THE START. 407

THE SOURCE OF THE CIEVNA 413

THE FRIARS 419

"GLORY BE TO HIM" 425

THE MAN OF GRUDI 431

THE MASS ON THE PLATEAU 437

THE INFERNO 443

"WHOSO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD" 449

AT PLAY 455

CALM AND DEEP PEACE 461

IN SCUTARI 465

THE MAJOR'S STORY 471

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	A Shooting Party	*Frontispiece*
		TO FACE PAGE
1.	The Author under Arrest	1
2.	General Tzontcheff	10
3.	Serres	27
4.	A Street in Monastir	27
5.	Albanians Entraining	30
6.	A Turkish Camp	30
7.	The Main Street, Monastir	37
8.	The Konak, Monastir	42
9.	The Vali of Monastir with Staff	48
10.	The Bridge over the Vardar	51
11.	A Turkish Village	51
12.	Guarding the Railway	58
13.	A Bargain in the Market	58
14.	Scandinavian Officers	64
15.	Refugees	64
16.	The Guard House, Monastir	77
17.	In a Bulgar Village	80
18.	Refugees	80
19.	The Band	88
20.	The Albanians	88
21.	Salonica	92
22.	A Turkish Patrol	92
23.	The Court House, Monastir	101

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		TO FACE PAGE
24.	A Street, Uesküb	107
25.	Kurdish Troopers	107
26.	En Route	111
27.	Kopriuli from the Railway	111
28.	In Florina	114
29.	Turkish Villagers. Bashibazouks	114
30.	The Great Mosque, Adrianople	121
31.	The Gateway of the Great Mosque	121
32.	The Turkish Soldiers at Jenidzé	125
33.	Priest's House, Jenidzé	125
34.	Adrianople	128
35.	Kirk-Kilisse	128
36.	Raklitza	132
37.	Sole Survivors of a Massacre	132
38.	A Cab, Adrianople	136
39.	A Street in Adrianople	136
40.	A Looted Village (1)	140
41.	A Looted Village (2)	140
42.	A Looted Village (3)	146
43.	A Band of Insurgents	146
44.	Driving in Bulgaria	153
45.	Law and Disorder	153
46.	"He of the Corporation"	154
47.	The Minister of Justice	154
48.	Philippopolis	160
49.	A Group of Bulgar Officers	160
50.	Dancing the "Horo"	163
51.	Bulgar Troops on the March	163
52.	Taking the Oath	166
53.	Bulgar Blockhouse	171

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		TO FACE PAGE
54.	My Friends	171
55.	The Bombs	173
56.	Saluting a Rival	173
57.	Coffee across the Border	174
58.	Speeding the Parting Guest	174
59.	Rilo Monastery	179
60.	The Monastery Church	179
61.	In the Rilo Mountains (1)	184
62.	In the Rilo Mountains (2)	184
63.	Lost	191
64.	Found	191
65.	General Tzontcheff Reconnoitring	198
66.	Evening in the Mountains	201
67.	In a Border Town	207
68.	At Cetinje. The Main Street	212
69.	The Monastery and Bishop's Palace, Cetinje	215
70.	The Lake of Scutari	219
71.	The Village Infants	224
72.	A Shepherd's Hut on the Brda	229
73.	The Pŏp and His Class	238
74.	At the Shrine of St. Vasili	250
75.	Amongst the Booths, Ostrog	256
76.	Father Deda	261
77.	Resting	268
78.	Bridge over the Moraća	279
79.	Church Parade	283
80.	Montenegrin Officers in Gala Costume	290
81.	The Women Prisoners	299
82.	The Male Prisoners	306
83.	The Central Prison	311

Digitized by Google

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		TO FACE PAGE
84.	The Café, Podgorica	312
85.	The Ruins of the Castle, Podgorica	316
86.	Gipsies breaking up their Camp	320
87.	Prince Mirko's Palace	327
88.	Bridge over the Zeta	332
89.	The Black Earth	344
90.	The River Lim	356
91.	On the Border	359
92.	The Avengers	365
93.	The Austrian Threat	376
94.	A Montenegrin Hotel	389
95.	Ups and Downs	399
96.	The Author in Albanian Costume	406
97.	Debating the Start	413
98.	Ringing the Church Bells	425
99.	A Scutarine and an Albanian	435
100.	Albanian Woman and Child	442
101.	Albanians	451
102.	The Bazaar, Scutari	464
103.	A Backwater, Scutari	467

MAPS

1.	La Carte Insurrectionelle	144
2.	The Balkans	*at end*

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THE INSURGENT PROVINCES

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THE AUTHOR UNDER ARREST.

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A Forecast. I

THERE are still a goodly number of people who believe Friday to be an unlucky day, and likewise connect the number "thirteen" with all manner of dire disasters.

"1904 will be a bad year," remarked an Austrian to me on New Year's Eve, "because it begins on a Friday. It is lucky it is not the 13th too."

The latter part of the above remark was doubtless a slip, and as such caused much merriment, but, oddly enough, thirteen days later, likewise on a Friday, the New Year was celebrated in the Balkans, where, as in Russia, time is reckoned by the old calendar. The very superstitious can therefore maintain that in a sense the New Year in the Balkans began on a Friday, and on the 13th, and deduce all kinds of catastrophes therefrom.

But joking apart, the immediate outlook in the Near East is exceedingly serious, and a peaceful solution well nigh impossible in the face of the many conflicting elements.

"The man who understands the Balkans does not exist," Count Bülow is reported to have said once, and in truth he is right.

We have two great Powers insisting on the introduction of impossible reforms, the successful fulfilment of which would set the half of the Sultan's European dominions in a

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blaze. There are the insurgents determined to fight on, openly deriding these same reforms. Bulgaria is convinced that the time has now come when she must, once and for all, decide the fate of her brethren in Macedonia, and put an end to the annual and exceedingly embarrassing influx of starving and destitute refugees. Trade is paralysed throughout European Turkey, the Mahometans are at the limit of their patience, and Servia, seething with discontent, is openly preparing for an external diversion in conjunction with Bulgaria.

Whichever way the observer turns he can find no solution but war; and a retrospective glance into the histories of these turbulent peoples will show an almost exact parallel of the present situation a little more than a quarter of a century ago.

A miracle alone can save the Balkans from war, and I firmly avow the belief that the days of miracles are over, even at the risk of proving myself a false prophet. The Near East is nothing but a vast field of conjectures, and so it is difficult to know where to begin.

There seems no doubt whatever that the insurgents intend carrying on their operations with increased vigour as soon as the snows begin to thin on the mountain passes. Probably they will strike some great blow in Turkey—for instance, the blowing up of the railway near Adrianople, which would lead to an immediate conflict between Turkey and Bulgaria. The latter country is very likely to gain some decided advantages at the commencement, and these would be sufficient encouragement to cause Servia to march on Uesküb, and perhaps Montenegro on Ipek or Scutari. Likewise the Bulgaro-Macedonians would rise *en bloc*, and the Albanians would raid right and left. The immediate sequence of these events would be the occupation of Mitro-

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vitza by Austria-Hungary—a step which would consolidate the now divided Albanian nation into a united whole against a common enemy—and the presence of an Italian fleet at Durazzo or Valona. The Turks would massacre, and a British squadron would land men at Salonica and perhaps force the Dardanelles.

Then will come the time for great European conferences, whilst the nations, big and little, are cutting each other's throats under the noses of the astute diplomatists, who will calmly and deliberately—with no indecent haste—dissect and rearrange the map of the Balkan Peninsnla.

This is a terribly gloomy forecast, but it is the most probable. However, we can comfort ourselves that the probable is seldom realized, particularly in the Balkans. The improbable is that the insurgents will quarrel seriously amongst themselves, as they are now actually doing, with the consequence that their blows will be indecisive and easily dealt with by Turkey. The end of the war in the Far East will leave Russia's hands free to crush any attempt on Bulgaria's part to go to war. The Servians will content themselves with an internal revolution and a new King (though this contingency scarcely comes under the head of improbability). Austria will content herself with a mere demonstration in the Sandjak of Novibazar, hastily subdued on a remonstrance from Italy, and the work of reforms will be peacefully carried on, assisted by a now contented Mahometan population. A little child shall lead the Albanians, who will joyfully submit to arrest by Christian gendarmes, pay their taxes and become a law-abiding, god-fearing people.

But, alas! it is just this last improbability which is the greatest of all, and one perhaps least reckoned with by Europe. Otherwise the picture would be idyllic, so much

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so that there is not a European statesman who will not smile when he contemplates it. In short, it is an after-dinner vision, when we sometimes fancy the world is Utopian.

To a very great extent the immediate fate of the Balkans depends on events in the Far East. This makes it extremely difficult to speak on the Near Eastern situation. The struggle in Asia is almost bound to cause a conflagration in the Balkans. Any serious reverse to the Russian arms would very likely lead to an outbreak of a serious nature in the interior of the Czar's dominions, which is seething with discontent. There is not a Balkan nation that would not use its advantage to the full, for however great Russia's influence may be—with her hands free—she is intensely hated by Serb, Bulgar, Greek and Turk alike. Montenegro is Russia's only friend and, to be biblical, what is one, and such a little one, amongst so many? On the contrary, Montenegro would inevitably join in the game of grab.

Then will Austria-Hungary take up her appointed task, and will duly, but with much pain, proceed to take the chestnuts out of the furnace.

That Austria-Hungary realizes her responsibilities to the full is very apparent at the present moment.

Three army corps, those of Temesvar, Sarajevo, and Agram, have been on a war-footing since April, 1903. A fourth, in Bohemia, has now been warned for service, and is doubtlessly intended to garrison the three districts eventually denuded of troops.

How near we were to an armed intervention on the part of Austria on more than one occasion last year, few outsiders know. I know that after the Belgrade tragedy several regi-

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ments were actually entrained, and for the officers of the above-mentioned army corps to obtain leave was at the critical junctures an impossibility. To-day, the probability of war is spoken of freely by both officers and men.

The task of Austria will be an extremely difficult one. In spite of a long-sustained propaganda amongst the Albanians, this warlike race will oppose any advance of Austria into their country to the last. Many are the talks that I have had with Albanians, both Mahometan and Christian, who declare that they will have neither Austrian nor Italian rule. They argue that the former, torn by internal dissension, has neither time nor energy to expend on additional territory, whilst the Italians they regard as utterly poor and incapable.

And this brings me to what I consider to be the crucial point of the Balkan question, viz., the future of Albania. Beside it the Macedonian problem fades into insignificance. There is a possibility, nay a probability, that when once Macedonia is granted autonomy—which is inevitable sooner or later—it will become as peaceable as Crete. But the accomplishment of this leaves Albania separated from Turkey, and, in its present state, a standing menace to the peace of the Balkans. What is to be done with Albania? Is it to be annexed, and by whom? What will Turkey do when she sees the severance of her last bulwark against the West inevitable? What Power will feel inclined to adopt this race, which has never hitherto acknowledged the yoke of a master, except in name: a nation that is born to arms, with no literature, no laws except the most primitive, divided into clans, and where the vendetta is compulsory: a nation divided against itself in times of peace by religion, yet animated throughout by the same love of independence,

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inhabiting for the most part inaccessible mountains, and imbued with a fierce hatred of foreigners ?

They have sworn to oppose the reforms, and they are men who know how to keep oaths ; they hold the trump cards at Constantinople, for the Sultan is literally in their hands.

Count Goluchowski has said that it will take two years to introduce the reforms. A more weak and foolish statement has seldom been made. Yet it is a commonly believed theory to-day that the Balkans can be ruled by firm diplomacy. As a matter of fact, the reform farce will probably last till the spring, and no longer. But assuming that the Bulgars, the Serbs, and the insurgents can be brought to reason and to relinquish their national ideas, we still have the Albanians with us.

I have heard that arms and ammunition have been steadily pouring into Albania during the past year, and it is a fact that the Vali of Scutari recently remarked to a personal friend last October, that now it would be too late for Turkey to attempt to quell a determined Albanian rising. Indeed Turkey could never dare really to crush the Albanians unless the Sultan ordered the wholesale massacre of his Albanian bodyguard, a contingency of the greatest improbability.

If a Power undertakes the task, then the Sultan will have to decide whether his life and throne are worth a war with Christian Europe. Sooner or later he will have to choose, for the patience of the Mahometans is rapidly and undoubtedly reaching its limit. It is another fallacy of Europe to believe that Turkey will submit to this interference in its own affairs for ever.

There is the proverb of the ultimate turning of the worm, and the Sultan has but to lift a finger to send every Christian in his Empire to destruction. Up till now, his subjects have

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given their sovereign no ultimatum of this kind, but there are signs that this eventuality does not belong to the impossible. Besides, Turkey is by no means a worm, but a nation animated to-day, as it was centuries ago, by the same fanatical hatred of the Christians, held in check in intelligent quarters now only by a wholesome fear of the hopelessness of a war against united Europe.

One thing is certain, that the loss of the Macedonian vilayets would inflict such a blow to the Sultan's prestige that his life would be worth nothing—a fact realized by him to the full. As it is, any thinking Turk will tell you that the country is rotten and impoverished. One province after another has been lost, indignities and insults are heaped upon it; but the time is coming when Turkey will stand this no more.

A Pacha bursting with indignation at some fresh indignity once said to me: "How long does Europe think we shall be her slave? How long, how long?" This he repeated a dozen times.

"We know what is coming," he continued passionately. "We must leave Europe; but where are we to go to? You must give us somewhere to go to. But *when* we depart, we shall go out on a wave of blood."

On the other hand, there are a few enlightened Turks, a very few, it is true, heartily sick of the corruption and bad government, who would welcome a change, though they clamour for the impossible—they insist on the annexation of Turkey by England, but by no other Power.

It is a noteworthy fact that in Salonica last summer, and at the time when the British Fleet was expected, it was feared that on its arrival the British flag would be run up on the citadel. Furthermore, several British correspondents,

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including myself, were secretly visited by deputations of the leading Turkish merchants, who begged them to use their influence to secure the active interference of Great Britain.

There are already many signs that the Sultan's patience is giving out. The last scheme of reforms cost him a tremendous effort to accept, and he has thrown every obstacle in the way, plainly hoping to retard the work till the spring, when insurgent "outrages" may disgust Europe, and cause it to leave Macedonia to its fate. In fact, this is the Sultan's only hope, and on it hangs his throne, though, happily for the wretched *rayahs* in his dominions, it is a forlorn hope.

It might be here pointed out that Turkey is to-day more vulnerable, and will be far more easily brought to its knees, than hitherto, for, thanks to years of corruption and bad government, it is defenceless by sea. It is not probable that even Russia would to-day attempt to march an army against Constantinople; but it would, and could, force the Bosphorus with the greatest of ease. Similarly it is held that the passage of the Dardanelles would present no difficulties. The mighty forts which frown over the narrow straits are believed to be useless; it is said that the artillerymen are, as in the field artillery, never drilled, and that the big guns, like the battleships, are not in working order.

As for mines, probably the explosives were sold within a week of their arrival, and it is not likely that a fleet would be fooled as was ours before Sebastopol, when, from fear of the mines known to be scattered in the entrance of the harbour, the British fleet—then minus the blessing of torpedo nets—stayed outside. The joke was that Nöbel afterwards remarked to an Englishman that not a single

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mine would have exploded a fortnight after it had been in the water, a knowledge which doubtless the British admiral would have paid dearly to obtain.

In another part of this volume I have dealt with the Turkish Army, but, bad as that is, the Navy beggars description. There is that famous yarn of a Turkish captain who was sent to Malta with his ship. After many days he returned, and made the now historical remark, "Yok Malta," which, being interpreted, means, "There is no Malta."

Another anecdote which may not be so well known is of comparatively recent occurrence.

There is a guard-ship at Salonica, a fairly modern-looking small cruiser, lying year in year out peacefully at anchor in the bay. One day an order came to the commander to take a cruise, and the consternation of that gallant officer was great, because no screw steamer can move without a shaft, and that had been sold some time ago. But he was a man of resource, and had a shaft made of wood, praying that it would break within the first few minutes. The wooden shaft held by some miracle, and as the cruiser slowly steamed out of the gulf, the captain's heart sank, for he had no desire to go to sea with a shaft that *must* break sooner or later. So he sent below, and had the shaft sawn half-way through. A little extra steam, and the desired was accomplished, and the guard-ship was towed back "disabled."

It is more than probable that the forts of the Dardanelles are in much the same condition, and those persons who declare the mines to be nothing but empty cases may be quite right.

Should the probable happen this spring, and war break out between Bulgaria and Turkey, I feel convinced that Europe

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has a surprise in store for her. I predict that Bulgaria will walk through Turkey until Europe stops her. On paper the Bulgarian army appears small compared to the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Turks, but in reality the superiority is only "on paper." Bulgaria is vulnerable on only one side, viz., the valley of the Maritza, and it will be between Philippopolis and Adrianople that the first decisive battle will be fought. The rest of her borders are more or less easily defensible.

The plan of campaign will be very simple. A Bulgarian army will hold the Maritza valley, and, if successful—which, with its superior discipline, organization, and equipment it probably will be—it will march on Adrianople. Simultaneously, a flying column of insurgents—now a uniformed Bulgarian corps, consisting of some five or six thousand of the most hardy, intrepid mountaineers in Europe with an intimate knowledge of the country—will cross the South-Western border and, keeping to the mountains, thoroughly demoralize the Turks from the rear. If no general Macedonian rising follows, hosts of small bands will operate all over the interior, blowing up the railway bridges and tunnels, with the consequence that Turkey will be in the midst of foes. Also it is quite likely that a second Bulgarian army will support General Tzontcheff's flying column, and by marching on Xanthi or Dedeaghatsch, threaten Adrianople from the rear, and also wedge itself between Eastern and Western Turkey. A glance at the map will plainly show the feasibility of this manœuvre, for the distance between the Southern Bulgarian border and the sea is not great, and has been traversed by bands constantly and with utter impunity during the recent insurrection.

Turkey's only chance is to crush Bulgaria in the Maritza

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GENERAL TZONTCHEFF.

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valley, and take Philippopolis; but the latter's advance, as above stated, would immediately threaten Turkey's base at Adrianople, and make the advantage thus gained of little value. Furthermore, a Turkish advance beyond Philippopolis is practically out of the question, as a small army could easily hold the passes over the lofty Balkans into Bulgaria proper.

Craven cowardice and utter incompetency of the Bulgarian generals can alone cause Bulgaria's downfall, and there have been enough proofs in recent years to show that Turkey cannot reckon on either of these primary factors assisting her.

Bulgaria is still the same nation, which a thousand years ago was one of the greatest in the world, and which won by hard fighting an Empire whose borders touched the Black and Egean seas, reaching far into Dalmatia on the Adriatic, and which was ruled by the first Emperors who proudly styled themselves "Czars," a title adopted five centuries later by Russia. I have also endeavoured in another chapter to show the extraordinary virility of this nation, and the enormously rapid strides they have made since gaining their independence once more.

The result of this war, if it occurs, will decide the fate not only of Macedonia, but of Turkey in Europe, and the task before the Powers is one of enormous responsibility.

The blunders of the Berlin Conference, and their ghastly consequences, must never be repeated, and independence must be restored to the only European nation still under the iron heel of the Ottoman Empire.

If Turkey has not learnt to govern with equity and justice during these long centuries, surely it is ridiculous to expect her to learn now, and within the space of a few months.

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" Anybody who has visited Turkey of late realizes the absurdity of expecting that country to govern itself in a civilized fashion," said an Austrian deputy recently in a speech on Count Goluchowski's optimistic scheme of reform. " Ergo, we should look the inevitable in the face."

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A Forecast. II

THE outlook in Servia is particularly unpromising. King Peter finds his crown a crown of thorns, and those who know declare his punishment just. Twice before has the present king's name been mentioned in connexion with plots against the Obrenović dynasty. Prince Michael was foully murdered in 1868, and the assassins were frustrated in their intention of immediately proclaiming Peter Karageorgević only by the merest chance, and in 1882 King Milan narrowly escaped his predecessor's fate, when again Peter's name was heard.

The remarkable influence which the regicides hold over the present king, in the teeth of Europe and the Servian people, is capable of only one interpretation, and the rumour that incriminating documents exist is hinted with ever-gathering force.

The feud between the Obrenović and Karageorgević families is of old standing, and is nothing but a vendetta such as is still prevalent more or less in the Orient.

"Black" George (Turkish "Kara") was the first hero of the Servian struggle for freedom, Milosh Obrenović the second, and it was Milosh Obrenović who assassinated Kara George in 1817 whilst he slept. Terrible has been

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the revenge of the descendants of Kara George, which was consummated in June last year, and stained the Servian nation with one of the most awful crimes of history.

It was less than two months before that ghastly tragedy that I sat in audience with the murdered king, and, by an odd coincidence, on the tenth anniversary of his sensational seizure of the reins of government as a boy of seventeen. A few days previously he had made his last and final *coup d'état*.

I had waited over two hours in an ante-chamber beyond the appointed time, and seen the newly appointed senators and ministers troop in—for they were all received that morning *en bloc*. Some of these too shared their royal master's awful fate, and others escaped by a miracle. I was taken for a further weary wait into the Royal music and billiard room combined, and had ample leisure to study Queen Draga's taste in modern French literature and periodicals, for it was apparent that she had only just left the room.

Then at last my turn came, and I was ushered into the presence of a tall, solemn-looking young man, King Alexander of Servia. He was exceedingly unaffected, for he bade me be seated at the council table in the royal arm-chair at the head, whilst he sat in an ordinary straight-backed chair at the side.

"You must come and travel in Servia as you have done in Montenegro," he said. "When you wish to come you must let me know, and I will arrange your tour."

Alas! I was never able to accept his invitation.

I asked him for an interview, which he declined to grant, on the plea of having received two other journalists within the last few days. Yet one word led to another, and he

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launched forth with great vigour, till he paused suddenly, and said with a laugh—

"Why, I am giving you the desired interview after all," and then he cut me short and added: "Now that I have begun, I will continue. What else do you want to know?"

Speaking of the reforms which had then just been submitted to the Sultan, he was very energetic, and his words hold good to-day.

"If Europe believes Turkey incapable of governing itself, then the proposed scheme of reforms is absurd, and no good can come from forcing elaborate measures on an admittedly inefficient government; and if, on the other hand, Turkey is capable of ruling her provinces properly, the reforms are unnecessary."

Alexander's enemies declared him to be an imbecile and diseased, but my own experience was that for three quarters of an hour he spoke with uncommon clearness and intelligence, and the interview I had with him was more interesting than many I have had with statesmen of reputed astuteness.

When he rose to dismiss me I ventured on a question, which I had been warned would be high treason to put. I asked if the recent *coup d'état* was made in order to nominate Queen Draga's brother as heir to the throne, as maintained in many continental journals.

The king's slightly sleepy air vanished, and, still holding my hand—for he had given me his at parting—he fairly thundered, "A lie, an infamous lie." Then his smile returned, and he remarked: "I am still very young; I am only twenty-seven. There will be time enough to think of that when I am twenty years older and still childless. To nominate an heir now would only sow dissension,

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and call up pretenders and plots. I am but twenty-seven, and why should I not have my own son ? "

Another remark he made in connexion with the *coup d'état*, when I hinted that the Servian people might be disaffected by the drastic change.

" I love my people, and am doing it for them. In time they will see that I am right. As for the present, I do not fear. I can reckon on my army to the last man."

Later that day I spoke to a prominent Servian, and repeated the king's denial of the rumour that his brother-in-law would be made heir, mentioning his argument as to his youth.

" Yes; but life is very uncertain," said the Servian.

" The king looks well enough," I answered.

" He may die suddenly," was the prophetic utterance of the Servian, and which I remembered with startling distinctness two months later.

As to the future of Servia, it is gloomy indeed. Scarcely a day goes past without some new rumour, and the departure of all the European ministers from the court of the king at the New Year has made a deep impression on the nation. One plot against the regicides has been discovered, but the next is being skilfully planned. The heart of the Servians, people and army alike, was not in the foul murder of last June, however much the majority might have welcomed the abdication of the Obrenović.

One thing the nation has already fully realized is that the rule of Alexander was no worse than that of the regicides, and their spirit rebels against the tyranny of a clique of officers, in whose hands their king is but a puppet—a tyranny which led to the boycott by Europe of their country.

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A FORECAST. II

If the king can keep his throne till the spring, then it is more than probable that Servia will go to war with Turkey. The regicidal party have already boldly declared that in this fashion they will be revenged on Europe; but much may happen ere then, and a bloody revolution seems another of the Balkan possibilities.

This time, however, it is likely that Austria will restore order in that misguided Balkan state.

One of the latest rumours declares that Prince Nicholas of Montenegro has been requested by Russia to interfere in the present untenable Servian position. King Peter will voluntarily abdicate, and the Powers appoint a new king, whose first duty would be to punish the regicides. This is an optimistic idea, though why Prince Nicholas should be entrusted with this task, excepting as father-in-law of King Peter, seems vague.

The part that Montenegro will play in the Balkan drama will not be very important; but if the game of grab commences, something is certain to stick to her fingers. Montenegro joined in the general blaze twenty-five years ago, and secured the formal recognition of her independence, besides doubling her area.

But the direst poverty handicaps the little country, and unless it is substantially backed by Russia it can never expand or grow rich.

There are two more factors in the Balkan confusion—Roumania and Greece. The former has been suddenly taking an interest in her kinsmen in Macedonia, but it is to be doubted if this mere show of sentiment will lead to more determined steps. Roumania is well content to be left alone, and to avoid all serious complications. With Greece it is very different. She has hated and oppressed

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the down-trodden Bulgarians for centuries, completing what the Turk left undone. Suddenly the worm turned, helped by Turkey, who loves to play off one Christian race against another, and in an amazingly short time the Greek priests, with their Church and language, were swept out of Bulgaria. Bulgaria had her own Church once more, snapped her fingers at the patriarchal thunders, and has, what is more, revived her religion and language in Macedonia, even unto the borders of Greece itself.

Then has come the Bulgaro-Macedonian insurrection, a movement in which the Greeks were invited to participate; but they refused, hoping to see the hated Bulgars crushed and exterminated, and fearing like death their ultimate success, which means, as in Bulgaria, the end of Greek influence in Macedonia.

The part Greece is playing in European Turkey is despicable in the extreme. Consuls wilfully distort facts, ignore Turkish atrocities on their own countrymen, and seek by every means in their power to check and malign the insurgents, who are fighting as much for the freedom of the Greek peasant as for the Bulgarian or Wallachian.

No subterfuge is too mean to further their schemes; whole villages are converted to the Patriarchal Church under the rifles of Turkish soldiers and promptly enrolled as Greeks. By hook and crook the Greeks are striving to prove a numerical superiority over the Bulgarians. As a matter of fact the statistics now show an almost equal population; but when once the country has secured autonomy, the relative numbers will be very different. I know many cases where pure Bulgarians term themselves Greeks, speaking the Greek language, and attending the Greek Church, purely from political or

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business reasons. Just as in Bulgaria a century ago the native indignantly declared he was a Greek, believing the admission of his real nationality to be a disgrace, so it is in Macedonia to-day, though largely modified since the activity and success of the bands.

For instance, my servant for a considerable part of my travels in the Balkans, whom I have called John, was a Bulgarian by birth and inclination, kidnapped in a sense as a child and educated at the Greek school, and now proudly enrolled as a Greek, though he was no more so than his father. His passport described him as a Greek, and when twitted on his apostacy he frankly declared that the privileges he thus obtained outweighed his nationality, saying—

"But when the time comes I shall be Bulgarian once more, and may that time come soon."

Certainly I could never have engaged his services had his pass declared him to be a Bulgarian.

The hatred of the Greeks for the Bulgarians is very natural. The Greeks are in every sense a deteriorated race, and powerless against the newly found strength and energy of the Bulgarians. They will stand no more chance of attaining supremacy in the new Macedonia than they did in new Bulgaria, but croakers who predict internal dissensions amongst the Christian races because of this are wrong. The Greeks are cowards, and will speedily accept the inevitable.

There was much talk last summer of the offer of certain Greek bands to help the Turks against the Bulgarians, and even of substantial support in the event of war. The offer was, I believe, accepted, but no Greek band was ever seen in the flesh or heard of again.

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Similarly, Bulgaria regards the offer of assistance in the event of war with equanimity. After the lamentable exhibition of the Greeks during the so-called war with their hereditary enemies, the Turks, these offers are in very questionable taste and savour of the ludicrous.

That Greece will get something out of the Balkans seems probable, and the Epirus, which is really Greek, may fall to its lot; but whatever precautionary measures are primarily adopted in Macedonia antagonistic to the Bulgarians—for they are undeservedly mistrusted by all—they are the nation that is bound ultimately to gain the ascendancy.

The most stupendous problem of all remains to be, at any rate mentioned, and that is the future of Constantinople.

Will that much-desired city be left to Turkey as her last and only foothold in Europe? That seems the easiest solution at the present moment, but it will constitute a standing menace to European peace till the question is settled for good, if that is ever possible under existing circumstances.

The subject is open to so many conjectures that nothing but mere allusion is possible in these pages. Constantinople and its future would furnish material enough for a book.

Salonica, I believe, is destined to become in the not too-far-off future an Austrian port, and, after all, that Power will deserve something for the arduous labours before it. When once the railway is built between Sarajevo and Mitrovitza—neither a difficult nor a lengthy task—Austria has her long-desired outlet in the Mediterranean, and can view Italy's intrigues on the Albanian coast with more equanimity.

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A FORECAST. II

In conclusion, there is one grain of comfort in this gloomy picture, viz., that the expected often does not happen, and in no country in the world does the unexpected play more tricks with the most careful calculations than in the Balkans.

Oddly enough, as I penned these last lines a letter arrived from Sofia, written by a leading Bulgarian.

"The situation darkens from day to day," he writes; "the preparations of the Bulgarian army are being pushed forward with the utmost speed and energy.

"Also the Turkish army is approaching the Bulgarian border. All preparations are being pushed because nothing good will come of the reforms, and the Macedonian question will now be decided by the sword. Most probably a terrible conflagration will burst in the coming spring.

"So we are now prepared to meet coming events with determination."

This is a literal copy of a letter received by the author on January 23, 1904.

Whatever happens, 1904 will be an eventful and memorable year in the Balkans.

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Reminiscences. I

THE one and only redeeming feature of railway travelling in European Turkey is the fact that practically all the employés are Europeans. This does much to mitigate the anxiety of a nervous traveller who may feel forlorn amongst the Mussulmans. The stationmaster is probably a genial Swiss, the bluff engine-driver hails from the Styrian mountains, while the conductor who punches your ticket is a light-hearted Italian from the Levant. Furthermore, they are all very communicative, sometimes distressingly so for the aforesaid nervous traveller. The stationmaster will conduct him with much glee to the scene of the last dynamite outrage and dilate on the awful effects of the explosion whilst standing on the shattered rafters of the ruined house. As the train creeps over a spidery viaduct the conductor will tell of the mine providentially discovered just in the nick of time under one of these very arches the day before yesterday; and the engine-driver of a passing train, leaning out of his cab, cheerfully sings out to his brother driver how at kilomètre 96 an Albanian regiment is amusing itself at the expense of the adjacent village.

However, these things sound much worse at a distance than when actually experienced. That is always the way with danger. It is the hour before the fight which is the worst, and so it is with the traveller to Macedonia who has

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been primed up with the horrors of Turkey in the neighbouring countries. The ignorance displayed by the inhabitants of Sofia or Belgrade is most annoying to the unsophisticated stranger. The writer himself was delayed four days at Belgrade because he was told at the Foreign Office that the passenger service in Macedonia was suspended owing to the railway having been blown up in several places. Other correspondents left their cameras, maps, and other necessaries carefully behind, because they had been primed that all such articles would assuredly be confiscated on the Turkish border. In reality, only certain books and arms of any kind are ruthlessly confiscated; and this reminds me of a certain jovial colleague of Irish descent who took with him, to beguile the weary journey, a book on the downfall of Turkey in Europe, with an appropriate picture on the cover. It very nearly led to his arrest and summary expulsion; but in this case there was certainly something to be said for the Turkish side.

As for me, my entry into Turkey was no more annoying than the ordinary Customs examination on the borders to any European country, though a fellow-passenger fared very differently. I left Belgrade one morning early, armed with a passport viséd to Monastir, which I had luckily extracted from the Turkish Minister to Servia, and after a monotonous wait of five hours in that most desolate of towns, Nish, and a still more trying night journey to Ristovac, the Servian frontier, I arrived at Zibeftché at five in the morning. Having passed the Rubicon in the shape of a bridge guarded by a ragged Turkish sentry, I was bundled out on the neat platform—for all the Oriental railway-stations are models of neatness and cleanliness—and an official captured my passport. Here it was that my sole

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civilised companion got into trouble. He was an American, full of ideas of independence and freedom, to whom a consul had once, very unadvisedly, said that he should under no circumstances yield up his passport. Accordingly, he refused to do so, flaunting it instead in the face of the still polite Turk, and jeering at me for my weakness. I endeavoured to dissuade him from his resolve, and told him that I had been in Turkey before, when the control was nothing in comparison to what it must be now, while the official fetched the stationmaster. The latter was a Swiss, but he only shrugged his shoulders when the American blatantly told him that he was an American citizen, and as such meant to stand no nonsense.

"You will have to give up your passport all the same; you are in Turkey now," remarked the stationmaster, and seeing me smiling, invited me to a cup of coffee.

"Lest worse things befall," he added to me with a wink; and indeed at that moment two files of soldiers, with fixed bayonets, were approaching, and stolidly surrounded the now rabid American.

We met again in the little Customs-house shed, where I found him raging more than ever, for the examining official had turned out all his belongings on the counter and was ransacking them to his heart's content.

"Not locked up?" I remarked genially, for he was a most objectionable man, while I unstrapped my bags.

"No; I gave 'em the darned thing, after all, but look at the muck this brute is making of my traps," he roared, bursting with indignation as the official captured a packet of tobacco.

"It's Turkish," he yelled to the imperturbable Turk, who at once turned to me, and after a casual glance at my

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belongings, passed them with a wave of the hand. He evidently thought the other *giaour* more interesting, and I left him extorting a fine of several *medjidieh* for undeclared contraband tobacco. My first impression of the Turk was decidedly good.

It was several days later, after a sojourn in Uesküb, that I met my companion in a Salonica hotel, waiting for a steamer to convey him to Egypt. He was still sore at his outrageous treatment, and breathed threats of consular action. He told me that on his arrival at Salonica on the eve of that fateful morning he had been met by an escort of gendarmerie and haled before the chief of police. His behaviour had so excited the suspicions of the Turks that they had somewhat foolishly held him to be a Bulgarian spy. However, he succeeded in proving his identity and harmlessness, and was dismissed with the customary apologies.

At Zibeftché I was soon brought face to face with the actuality of the revolution. About 100 yards from the station lay the ruins of a goods-shed. A few days previously, contrary to custom, a heavy packing-case, addressed to a merchant at Uesküb had been unloaded from the train and placed in this shed, pending telegraphic instructions from the addressee. In any case it would have been forwarded next day to Uesküb. Meanwhile, however, at the exact time the original train arrived at Uesküb the case blew up with a terrific report, demolishing the shed and hurling fragments of iron great distances, though without loss of life. The case weighed 45 kilogrammes, so some idea of the force of the explosion may be gathered.

Had the case been forwarded as usual the loss of life would have been terrible, for crowds of people invariably await the arrival of every train. Furthermore, the Maho-

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SERRES.

A STREET IN MONASTIR.

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metan element at Uesküb at the time was in a state of rabid fanaticism, meeting daily in the mosques, and the smallest outrage would have been the signal for a general massacre. The Europeans in Turkey had many providential escapes last summer, but this was undoubtedly the greatest.

There is a remarkably true saying to the effect that a good or lucky beginning means a bad ending, and *vice versa*.

Certainly this was my experience with the Turkish authorities. My entry into Turkey was the sole pleasant experience in this respect. Everywhere else I had to undergo rigid examinations and endless formalities. At Salonica I arrived late one night, and was, as usual, cross-questioned by the station police as to where I had come from—which they very well knew, for they spoke to me by name and told me what paper I was representing—where I was going to, how long I intended staying, and which hotel I would patronize. The latter question was very unnecessary, for an official accompanied me in the cab, rang the hotel bell, and waited outside till I had actually entered. The Turks take no risks in this respect. At Florina, near Monastir, and at Adrianople, I broke bounds, so to speak, and the consternation and helplessness of the authorities was highly amusing. But I have dealt with these episodes elsewhere. To travel anywhere in Turkey itself an extra inland pass or *Tescari* is necessary, and even if the traveller is going only to the next station it must be viséd and stamped and paid for before he may leave the place. The annoyances which arise from this rule are endless, and for a correspondent, who has often to move quickly, and to whom the missing of the daily train means a delay of twenty-four hours, particularly exasperating.

At Serres, whither I once journeyed from Salonica, I was

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kept herded with a crowd of evil-smelling peasants in a tiny room over an hour, though my pass was in order, whilst an exhaustive examination was made of my hand-bag. Presumably the idea was to find dynamite concealed in the lining thereof. Still, these things must be borne with; there is no escape, for sentries with fixed bayonets guard every exit, and a ruder man than a Turkish soldier on guard is hard to find. They waste no words, but what they do say is accompanied by such an insulting glance that the average Englishman who receives it fairly boils with helpless rage.

I remember an incident of this kind at Monastir. There was a path I often used to cross the railway to enter the station and avoid a long détour. One day, for some reason or other, a Turkish sentry was posted there. He was squatting on his haunches, and in fact I did not even think he was on guard. He let me get within a few yards of him, when he rapped out that hated "Dur." Thinking he meant merely to insult me, I walked on. Without rising he lifted his rifle and snarled "Dur" once more. My man expostulated; but the only answer was that no one might pass, and he would shoot any one that tried to. Now, a man cannot argue with a pointed rifle a few yards away, so I yelled for the stationmaster, who ultimately came, and I continued my walk with very ruffled feelings. Next day the sentry was removed. But that is always so in Turkey.

Fortunately, bluff will do much to help a traveller in Turkey. The man who asks permission to do things or see them will find his efforts in vain. It is a golden rule to do what you want first and ask afterwards. The Turks object very strongly to photography though, as far as I know, there is no actual law forbidding it. At Uesküb I was once

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"snapping" a regiment of particularly mutinous Albanians entraining at the station. I had secured three or four pictures when the commanding officer noticed me and sent his adjutant to request me to desist. At that moment a particularly good picture struck me, and politely asking the officer to repeat the remark, I snapped the scene.

"You have taken it, after all," exclaimed the officer angrily in French, and repeated the order.

After that I changed my position and got down to the other end of the platform and a long line of empty wagons. Suddenly a mob of soldiers made a dash for the empty trucks, and came sweeping down the platform like an avalanche. Officers were carried along in that seething mob, and amongst others the Commandant himself, struggling violently to extricate himself. It was too good a chance to be lost, and I hastily "took" the mad scene. The rage of the Commandant was too ludicrous for words—he was a big, corpulent man with a very red nose. When he had extricated himself he approached me gesticulating violently, and halting within a few paces he took off his fez and dashed it on the ground. After he had placed a file of soldiers, who solemnly fixed bayonets, immediately in front of me, and where I moved they moved also.

Another amusing instance I remember was at Monastir, where Bakhtiar Pacha's brigades were encamped after their return from massacring and village burning. I went into the camp—they were under canvas—and was snapping merrily away when an officer approached me and asked me if I was taking a photograph.

I replied, "No; but I would like to." At the moment I was not taking photographs. "May I go right amongst the tents and the soldiers?"

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"I will ask the Colonel," he said, and left me.

Now I knew what the answer would be, so I used up the few remaining films on suitable objects and waited. The officer returned after a while.

"The Colonel much regrets his inability to grant you the required permission," he said; "but the men are not in their best uniforms, and it would be taking them at a disadvantage."

"Thank you," I replied, and put my camera away, preparatory to retiring.

Another instance occurred at the prison at Monastir. I had succeeded in getting inside, but had to wait a long time for Hilmi Pacha's answer whether I should be allowed to go over the prison or not. There was again no doubt how the answer would run, so I tried to get a few snapshots in the meanwhile. I took a picture of the outer palisades by walking quickly on to the corridor, and very nearly took a second, more interesting, picture of a wild group of men on one side peering through a peephole, and a lot of women handing in clean linen, fruit, and other simple edibles, on the other. These were evidently captured or suspected insurgents. But at this juncture an officer arrived and invited me to coffee. Coming upstairs I had noticed that the stairs overlooked the inside of the aforesaid palisades, which was crowded with prisoners. Accordingly, when the definite refusal arrived I had made my camera ready, and as we passed the inner court I paused a moment and snapped it.

"You must not photograph here," exclaimed the accompanying officer hastily.

"No?" I asked, in a disappointed voice, bringing the camera down.

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ALBANIANS ENTRAINING.

A TURKISH CAMP.

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The officer bowed low.

"I am sorry," he said, "but it is strictly forbidden."

"I am likewise sorry," I replied, and packed up my camera, whilst the worthy officer rubbed his hands in appreciation of my pliability.

He was the same man who naïvely remarked that the prison was full of insurgents.

"Not the *big* ones," he said. "They are all safe in Bulgaria again, but only *little* ones."

There is sometimes a delightful charm in the way Turks make unpleasant admissions. Murders are rarely mentioned as such in Turkish papers, but read somewhat as follows: "We regret to have to state that M. So-and-So has died suddenly. The guilty persons have been imprisoned."

When the King and Queen of Servia were murdered, it was many days before the truth came out in Constantinople. Then people read that the King, Queen, and several Ministers all died on the night of June 11, in Belgrade.

But perhaps the funniest remark of all was made to me by the Greek Bishop of Florina who, when asked how he could explain away the massacre of a *Greek* village by his beloved friends the Turks (Armensko, August, 1903), replied—

"Nothing easier. You see the Turkish soldiers shoot badly and were aiming at the Bulgars in the village. (N.B. It was a purely Greek village as it happened.—The Author.) Alas! they hit the Greeks."

There is a good deal of topsy-turveydom in Turkey. The nodding of the head to signify "no" and a shake of the head "yes" is very hard to learn. Likewise the starting of the clock at sunrise is distracting, for naturally the time changes by a few minutes every day. Also their months

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run differently, and according to the Turkish calendar a man's birthday falls on a different day in our calendar every year.

The coinage is likewise distracting where the Turkish pound varies in value in each town. Nominally worth 100 piastres, I have got as much as 108 piastres in change in one town and less than 100 in another.

But oddest of all is the rigorous examination which the traveller undergoes in leaving Turkey. Most countries content themselves with a more or less careful search of a traveller's baggage on entering the country, but what he takes out of the country —unless he be a notorious thief— is a matter of utter indifference. Not so in Turkey. When I arrived at the station nearest Adrianople one morning at five o'clock, en route for Bulgaria, I saw my baggage piled up in a corner and, leaving them in John's care, I went into the refreshment bar.

Hardly had I seated myself when John came in and asked me for my keys.

"What for?" I asked.

"Your baggage must be examined before you may take the train," said John.

"But what rot; didn't you say that I was *leaving* the country?" I shouted at the unfortunate John, who explained that he had spoken of his master's probable annoyance, but the Turks were indifferent.

Out we went into the dark dank hall, where Turks had my baggage upon a trestle board and were eyeing it hungrily.

Expostulations helped me not one whit, and soon my bags were open and being overhauled in a fashion never before experienced by me. In vain I stamped up and down in helpless fury at this meaningless outrage, only increased

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when they captured sundry photographs (particularly one of myself taken in Monastir with my Albanian *kavass*) and a handful of revolver cartridges loose in my bag.

"Was your master an insurgent too?" asked a Turk of John, pointing to my photograph.

"No," I roared, "an English correspondent, and the other chap is an Albanian. Can't you see that by the dress?"

"Well, we must keep these things," remarked an old bearded Turk, who had been obviously enjoying my anger. He lost much, though, by not understanding English.

He was walking away with them when I stopped him and asked him for a written receipt.

"We shall give you nothing of the kind," he said, and disappeared.

I looked at my watch. In ten minutes the train would be here and I should want more than that to pack. Then an idea struck me, and I sat down and lit a cigarette, telling John not to pack.

Very soon the police officer told off to see me safely off the premises went up to John and asked why we did not pack up, and said that we should miss the train.

"We are going to miss it," I said coolly.

Now this man knew the anxiety of the Porte to get me out of the country and had witnessed the local Vali's co-operation on the preceding night. It would never do for me to miss the train.

"Why, Effendi?" he asked.

"Because," I said very slowly, "I am not going to be robbed in a barefaced manner, and will wait even a week for my things."

The officer's face dropped, and he disappeared. In less

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than a minute he returned with the confiscated articles and placed them in my bag. Then he begged me to hurry up and pack.

"No," I said firmly. "You did it, and if you want me to go to-day you will have to re-pack."

In five minutes my bags were packed and strapped, considerably neater than before. I climbed into the train with a lightened heart, only to be considerably upset at a conversation I had with a German engineer of the Oriental railway. He had learnt of my experience at Adrianople station, but replied that it was nothing.

"Wait till you get to Mustapha Pacha," he said. "There you will be examined as you never have been before, and the confiscation of every photographic film and map is a certainty."

Then it struck me that I had insurgents' hand-made maps, copies of their reports, and a lot of photographs of Turkish military operations.

"You will be run in then if they are found on you. Take 'em out of your bag, anyway. It is a marvel they were not found at Adrianople."

With great trouble we unpacked again, and we sorted out incriminating papers, stuffing them into my pockets till I resembled Falstaff.

"If they find all those things *on* you," remarked the engineer genially, as we drew up at Mustapha Pacha, "it'll take your Ambassador a month to get you out of prison."

And as we walked towards the Customs House he told me how a lady was recently bodily searched, though travelling with her husband.

"Will you just open your bags? It will be quite suffi-

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cient," remarked a rubicund Turk inside. "Thanks; you may pass on."

"That's luck," remarked the German outside. "The strict brute is not there to-day. Pleasant journey."

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THE MAIN STREET, MONASTIR.

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Reminiscences. II

A PROLONGED stay at a Turkish town in the interior is not a very cheerful affair, particularly at the present juncture. There is always a feeling prevalent that something unpleasant is going to happen, and the European residents betray their anxiety at every turn. Some are taciturn and unfriendly, others the reverse, and these pretend to joke on dangers and massacres.

One of the foreign consuls there called on me recently in Vienna, just before his return after a few weeks' well-deserved leave. He has already occupied his present post for many years, and is hoping for a speedy transfer to a less exciting region. I remember his parting remark as we shook hands: "Only a few more months at Monastir, and I shall be transferred, unless—the change comes too late."

Europe by no means realizes the danger ever present in European Turkey since the farce entitled, "The Reforms for Macedonia" was begun. A Mahometan population is always unsafe, yet we are trampling regardlessly on their most sacred feelings, heaping fresh indignities upon the head of their ruler, utterly ignoring the fact that we are dealing with a race of semi-civilized fanatics.

I had ample opportunities for studying the Turk in Monastir, as I was exceedingly well received at the com-

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mencement, seeing him at his best. There is no more courteous and affable gentleman than the educated Turk; and it is one of the hardest things imaginable to realize that the suave and smiling man before you is lying, and lying all the time.

By far the cleverest of all the Turks I met was Hilmi Pacha, the Inspector-General of Reforms. His perversion of the truth was simply superb, and we used to say of him that he could make a man believe that Paris was really the capital of England, and prove it by statistics.

As in duty bound, on my arrival in Monastir my first visit was to him. I did not go there to write either for or against the Turks, in fact, if anything, I was slightly prejudiced in their favour, as so many correspondents were—at the commencement.

I drove to Hilmi's residence, the sentries "presented arms," and I was almost immediately ushered into his Excellency's presence. He was a slight man, of medium height and most refined appearance. A black beard half covered his face, and he was clad in the conventional frock-coat and, of course, the fez. In his hand he carried invariably a string of beads, as so many Turks do, with which he played incessantly, betraying a nervous and sensitive temperament.

After the inevitable coffee and cigarettes had been served I went straight for the massacre and sack of Krushevo, which was of recent occurrence. Hilmi Pacha is a great talker and a past-master in the art of keeping the conversation in his own hands. Whenever an awkward subject is broached Hilmi seldom allows the other man to say much after the first question, yet it is done so unostentatiously that the questioner often does not realize that he is not

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even getting in a word edgeways. On the contrary, he leaves the subject thankfully, feeling that he has done the Turks a great injustice.

That was very much my own feeling after I had inquired into the Krushevo massacre story, and listened for about an hour to Hilmi's account of the humanity of the Turkish soldier. Irregularities had been committed certainly—Hilmi is never fool enough to deny everything; but in this case a band of thirty Bashibazouks were guilty, in spite of the energy of Bakhtiar Pacha, who, in the vain attempt to drive them off, actually slew two. Afterwards, when the ban of Hilmi's personality was removed, the absurdity of the explanation struck me: thirty Bashibazouks—those dreadful scapegoats of official Turkey—defying a disciplined army of over four thousand men: thirty Bashibazouks, minus two, who burnt two hundred and eighty houses of substance, two hundred and three shops, and killed nearly one hundred people, and stole the four thousand head of cattle, which Hilmi actually admitted had been removed. It was subsequently, over the cattle, that I nailed Hilmi's first falsehood fast, for on that first visit he told me that by his orders they had already been returned, and I had it on unimpeachable authority a few hours later, that this was not so. Next day I returned to the attack, producing my proofs, but Hilmi blandly ignored them, saying the cattle must be there, for he had ordered it.

Poor Hilmi, into what corners was he not sometimes driven by inconsiderate consuls and correspondents, where even *his* glib tongue could not save him!

I remember a capital story told me by one of the consuls, just after a visit.

Hilmi had received a telegram from one of the Turkish

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commanders, stating that he had recaptured the town of Klissura, which was said to have been held for the past few weeks by the insurgents. The general described the operations at length, explaining that he had only surrounded the town on three sides, in order to permit the insurgents to escape. The object was to obviate the discovery of any insurgents in the town itself, and thus prevent the irate soldiery from a repetition of the Krushevo horrors.

"Thus, my dear Consul, you see how we are striving to avoid these atrocities," said Hilmi after he received back the telegram.

"Yes," remarked my friend; "but there never were any insurgents in the town at all. They occupied only the adjoining heights."

Hilmi looked very distressed.

"But it is a telegram from General So-and-so (I forget his name), *just* received."

The Consul, however, remained unbelieving.

Then Hilmi played his trump card.

"I have outside a man, a Christian native of Klissura, who arrived not an hour ago. I will call him in and you can yourself hear his evidence"; and Hilmi touched a bell and ordered the appearance of the man in question.

The man came in.

"Sit down, my son," said the Pacha sweetly. "Bring him coffee and a cigarette."

They were given to the astounded Christian, who had never been treated in this fashion by a Turk in his life.

"Now, my son, give heed to my question. How many insurgents were in the town of Klissura?"

"None, your Excellency," stammered the man.

"Tut, tut, my son. Thou didst not understand. How

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many insurgents were in the town before it was recaptured by the Turkish troops? Be careful and speak the truth."

"Your Excellency, there was never a single insurgent in Klissura itself. They were all on the hills outside."

"Exactly so," remarked the consul. "The man is speaking the truth."

It was to another consul that Hilmi Pacha actually made the following astounding admission when cornered by an undeniable atrocity freshly committed by the Turkish troops.

"What can you expect?" he said despairingly. "The redifs and ilaves have no discipline and the nizams (regulars) very little."

Turkish officials never or rarely say "No" to a request, at least not directly. I asked Hilmi Pacha for permission to visit the prison and the hospitals on one occasion.

"Certainly," he replied, and launched into a discourse about the prison life, and how he had applied to the Porte for permission to build a new prison.

"Not that the present one is bad, for the prisoners are really quite contented. But for Western ideas——"

I did ultimately visit both, in a sense, for I was shown two wards in the hospital where the mild cases were, but was told that the rest of the hospital was not worth inspecting —there were no interesting cases. As a matter of fact, it was overcrowded with sick and wounded soldiers and an assortment of choicely mutilated Bulgarians, as I ascertained afterwards from the only European who went all over it. The prison I entered by guile, and was kept in an antechamber whilst word was sent to Hilmi requiring confirmation of the already given permission. It was refused, but I had by that time made myself very unpopular with the

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Turks. All the same, I saw enough to assure myself that the permission would never have been given, any more than I was allowed to see over the entire hospital.

It was equally amusing and exasperating when I tried vainly to obtain permission to travel into the country and "prove for myself the falsehood of the Turkish atrocities."

"Oh, certainly I could go. The country is completely pacified and there is no danger."

I stated my intention of starting the next day.

"To-morrow? No; for there is just one small band left, but next week, yes."

Of course a week later other excuses were found, and so on.

This reminds me of a story. A correspondent of a Turcophile paper came to Monastir armed with all manner of Sultanic iradés and special permits, but an honest man nevertheless. He was given a special dragoman, and with a small escort he was allowed to make short excursions into the neighbourhood. He, however, soon realized that he was not seeing anything except what the Turks wanted, until one day a consul gave him a hint to drive at once to a certain place where at the very moment a band had been surrounded and was being wiped out. The Consul furthermore remarked that the dragoman was merely a police spy.

The advice was not acted upon promptly, for the correspondent went first to Hilmi Pacha, who delayed his departure till the following morning.

Still accompanied by the dragoman spy, he drove out to the scene of yesterday's fight. The carriage pulled up at a village, and a party got out; but here the correspondent noticed that the inhabitants avoided him and his companion like the very pest. Then he took to his heels and ran. He was an athletic fellow, and very soon left spy and gen-

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THE KONAK, MONASTIR.
[*Decorated for the Sultan's Birthday.*]

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darmes behind. On he ran till he came to the scene of yesterday's massacre, for the band had been betrayed and killed to a man. A little study of the corpses was enough; the correspondent returned to Monastir, packed up, and left for Salonica by the next train. He had seen enough.

There was always an uncanny feeling in Monastir. I never got over it, though in a sense I got used to it. With the exception of the consuls and the few correspondents, everyone wore the fez—Christians as well as Mussulmans. The result was a sea of fezes on the streets, and the number of ragged soldiers always loafing up and down was appalling, though never quite as bad as in Uesküb. One young Christian whom I chaffed for wearing the hated fez promptly showed me the scarcely healed scar of a knife wound, which he had received when wearing the hat of the European. On another occasion a Bulgarian peasant was stabbed on the market in the midst of a great crowd of traders. He was haggling with a Turk, when suddenly the latter struck him a blow on the chest. We none of us realized for a few minutes that the man was dead, stabbed through the heart. As for the murderer, he coolly walked away, though the police were all over the place; and next morning his father was arrested, and this only in consequence of an urgent demand for justice on the part of a consul.

Few people can have any idea of the incessant worry which pertains to a consul's life in Turkey. He is for ever demanding redress for some glaring wrong, and receiving the visits of despairing peasants, who flock to him as their only refuge. From morn till night he is perpetually on the go—that is if he is a conscientious consul, which some of them are not—bullying this Turkish official, flattering another, and threatening a third with the wrath of his country; visiting the sick

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and wounded in the hospitals, inspecting the prison, and helping the starving refugees. Besides this, there are the Consular despatches to be coded, and voluminous reports to be written. And added to all this worry is the ever-present threat of murder, often in the form of anonymous letters. I am sadly afraid that many of these brave men will never see their homes again.

In one respect, however, the position of the consuls in Macedonia is unique. They are little kings, to whom the Turkish soldiers on duty must salute or be severely punished. Their kavasses or body guards are most gorgeous and impressive individuals, heavily armed, and invested with the power of a policeman. Sentries stand day and night before their doors. At Uesküb a force of several hundred soldiers were encamped round the consulates, and woe to any stranger who approached after dark.

For courtesy, tact, and capability the palm undoubtedly belongs to the Austro-Hungarian consuls, but the two first virtues are often painfully absent from the Russians. Both Shsterbina and Rostkowski owed their deaths in great measure to their overbearing demeanour, certainly the former. Another Russian consul now at Mitrovitza once thrashed a Turkish gendarme at the Uesküb railway station simply because the man touched the Consul's arm as he stood on the metals to warn him of an approaching train. The injustice of such brutal treatment is obvious when one realizes that the gendarme would have been severely punished had the Consul been run over, and he was simply doing his duty. This is but an example of many such cases.

Briefly, it is only to be wondered at that not more Russian consuls have been murdered.

It was Mandelstamm who, after Rostkowski's murder,

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forced his way into Hilmi Pacha's presence with a loaded revolver in his hand, which he brandished in the Pacha's face.

On being remonstrated with, the Russian Consul declared his life to be in danger as well here as outside.

When Rostkowski's murderers—or murderer, to be more correct: the second man's only crime was that he looked on—were hanged, Mandelstamm insisted on being present, an action requiring no little courage. But to give the Russian his due, he is undoubtedly brave. Then they always wear a Russian uniform, and are as aggressively conspicuous as possible.

But to return to Hilmi Pacha. He has won a great reputation for benevolence and humanity, which is rather undeserved, I think. For a Turk he is a good man, and, without doubt, he would have prevented some of the atrocities had he always the power or the knowledge. On the other hand, he has been guilty of much gratuitous cruelty. One or two instances will be quite sufficient to prove my statement.

It was after the massacre of Krushevo that the French Sisters of Mercy in Monastir applied for permission to journey thither to attend to the totally neglected wounded. During the massacre the doctor had been killed and the apothecary wantonly destroyed.

Hilmi Pacha replied, with true Oriental fatalism, that it was not necessary, because those that were going to die would die anyhow, and those that were going to recover would get well without the Sisters' help.

Another instance was in regard to the kidnapping of Christian children by the Mahometans, a crime which flourishes to such an extent that there are professional

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child-finders, some of whom make quite small fortunes. The Turkish population is slowly but surely decreasing, owing to the appalling immorality of the modern Turk. To keep up the numbers of people very young Christian children are kidnapped, and brought up as Mahometans, as the offspring of their abductors, or buyers, as the case may be. There was one day a particularly glaring case in Monastir, when a soldier sold two children openly, for a *medjidieh*. A Bulgar bought them, because he recognized in them the children of one of his friends, a survivor from the massacre of Smilevo. The news reached the ears of the consuls and correspondents, and Hilmi Pacha was duly called upon. He afterwards issued orders that no more children were to be brought to Monastir for sale, but sold in outlying districts, "where there were no prying consuls or correspondents."

But when all is said and done I must confess to an honest admiration for Hilmi Pacha. He is a born diplomatist and an adept at getting out of warm corners. To sit at his feet, metaphorically speaking, and listen to that easy flow of talk, explaining away difficult problems and awkward subjects with the thinnest imaginable yet, to some, absolutely opaque veil of falsehood is really worthy of experience. Some of the foreign officers then at Monastir to reform the gendarmerie used to tell how they would spend hours with Hilmi Pacha and the subject of reforms would never once be mentioned, yet they had been sent for to discuss the subject. Hilmi Pacha's position was doubly difficult. Not only was he responsible to the Powers for the proper introduction and administration of the reforms, but he was also held responsible by his sovereign lord and master, the Sultan, for their successful non-introduction.

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He has to refer the smallest matter to Yildiz, and may not move a step in the matter before the answer comes. He has not to move much or often. One of his secretaries once admitted to a mutual friend that the Inspector-General of Reforms received an enormous quantity of answering telegrams from Constantinople, but they were all distressingly brief and monotonous, containing but one word—"No." Even Hilmi Pacha admitted this handicap to me in conversation.

I am amused now when I look through my notebook and see the headings I jotted down for one of my first interviews with Hilmi. It reads, "Ask permission to visit, respectively, the hospital, prison, some destroyed villages, Krushevo, Armensko," etc. As answer to the first two I read, "Ask again later," but the other answers are blank. Probably I did not understand them at the time, but at any rate they remained blank, and this I quote as a thoroughly characteristic story of an experience with Hilmi Pacha.

He was a great man, too, at obtaining information. One of my colleagues told me the first time he saw Hilmi after spending some weeks in the country that Hilmi recited his every movement with correct date during that time. And we were another time much amused in Monastir when a correspondent of great cunning arrived disguised as an antiquarian and sought to persuade Hilmi into allowing him to visit certain districts in the neighbourhood to look for Roman ruins. Soon after his departure—for he was not successful—I learnt that Hilmi Pacha knew the name of the paper of which he was a sub-editor and of the other paper for which he was at that moment corresponding. Hilmi was also a great hand at sending me gentle hints

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through roundabout but sometimes direct sources. The first was a warning that the Bulgar insurgents meant to murder me on the first opportunity; this failing in its desired effect, I received an indirect message that my work was most displeasing and that "it would not be stood much longer." Still I stayed on, and Hilmi Pacha played his trump card: he ordered my expulsion from Turkey.

I well remember the occasion, for we were quite a large gathering that evening in the garden of the Hotel Belgrade, when the British Vice-Consul arrived with the news. Everybody looked disgusted except myself, and I was already conjuring up visions of armed escorts of gendarmerie taking me to the nearest border, when the Consul said that he had applied for confirmation to the Ambassador.

"If he says you must go, you will have to; but until then I have refused to have you expelled," remarked the Consul. "Hilmi wanted you to leave to-morrow and told me to advise you, in your own interests, to go quietly."

"They will surround you with a guard of fixed bayonets and head the show with a band," murmured a brother correspondent. "Great Scott, what luck!"

For two days I was kept in suspense whilst my telegrams were carefully examined by the Consul at the instigation of the Ambassador, and, finding them correct and truthful, I was permitted to stay. I mention this incident with a special object, viz., as an answer to many who declared that I exaggerated wilfully. There were five more attempts made to expel me, and had I been guilty of untruthfulness nothing could have kept me in Turkey. That is why I always ache to see our consular reports published when Turcophile Englishmen talk of "the balance of crimin-

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THE VALI OF MONASTIR.

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ality." It would save much absolutely unnecessary and useless argument.

After this episode—I learnt of the other five attempts on my return to England—Hilmi Pacha left me severely alone, and beyond hearing occasional threats of murder, this time openly from the Turks, I lived in peace in Monastir.

But in conclusion I must add that the Turkish official version of the reason for my expulsion was not because I was writing against the Turks and exposing atrocities, but that I had insulted his Majesty the Sultan.

And in all my telegrams and correspondence, from start to finish, the Sultan's name was never even once mentioned. It was a genuine Turkish dementi.

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THE BRIDGE OVER THE VARDAR.

A TURKISH VILLAGE.

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Reminiscences. III

THE TURKISH ARMY

RIGHTLY or wrongly, the Turkish army of last century had a tremendous reputation for courage and other fighting qualities. There are many who still hold that belief to-day. It is a commonly accepted theory when comparing the respective chances of another army with the Turkish that the latter is and always has been a splendid fighting machine, even if unkempt and dirty. As far as the latter belief is concerned it is absolutely and painfully correct, for a more disreputable looking rascal than a soldier of the Imperial Ottoman Army can scarcely be imagined, except perhaps in a Portuguese colony or a Central American Republic. His face is stamped with evil lusts and cruelty, and is a confirmation in itself of the tales of his atrocities.

Regarding his past reputation as a fighter, he has certainly given his enemy much trouble, though purely through acting on the defensive. That is doubtless his great if not his only military virtue. Put a Turkish soldier in a fort and tell him to stop there, he will do so—unless there is dynamite about. But I cannot remember, at any rate during the last century, any instance where the Turk has assumed the offensive against an equally determined foe with success. The Turco-Greek war cannot be quoted because of the abject cowardice of the Greeks, who nowhere made a stand. But

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witness little Montenegro, which defied the Ottoman Empire at its zenith for five long centuries and was never beaten.

Even in bygone centuries, when the Turkish Empire carried all before it, the pick of the army who bore the brunt of the battles were the corps of Janissaries, who were not Turks at all, but whilom Christian children trained to war practically from infancy. When this famous corps collapsed, Turkey's power began to wane, and it has been steadily deteriorating ever since.

To-day the Turkish soldier is utterly demoralized—like the whole nation. Whatever the common belief is of his prowess in bygone times, he is to-day by no means the valiant, reckless soldier who marches joyfully into battle conjuring up visions of paradise. On the other hand, he is a most abject coward, and has displayed it scores of times in fighting these handfuls of insurgents. Perhaps he may think that being blown to pieces by dynamite does not constitute a free pass to the arms of his houris. At any rate there has been no instances of his cheerfully sacrificing his life when the bombs are in the air; he prefers rather the seclusion of the adjacent mealie field, or prays for quieter times, immersed to the neck in water the while.

It was near Uesküb that the above actually happened. The European engineers were summoned hastily to the nearest bridge over the Vardar, where bombs had just been thrown, and found the guard especially placed there to protect the bridge conspicuously absent. It took the engineers as long to discover the mine as it did to hunt out the guard.

Yet in day-time they are brave enough—in a way. It was the morning after the above incident had occurred that a Turkish battalion passed through the station Selanik, close to the bridge. On the platform lay

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the corpse of a soldier killed the previous night. There were also five Bulgarian platelayers and the European station-master. With a howl of rage the battalion descended and chopped up the five innocent platelayers, while the station-master went mad at the sight. I passed through the station a day or two later.

To show the uniformity of the Turkish army in their fear of dynamite I will repeat a tale as told me by an engineer on the Adrianople line—the other side of European Turkey. It was just after the dynamite outrage at Kuleli-Burgas, and a whole company of troops were detailed to watch the line just outside the station. One night there was a loud report and a stampede. When the railway officials went out to see what had happened, there was not a soldier to be found, and it took over an hour to collect them. Next day, however, two harmless peasants were seized, bound to posts and kept so throughout the blazing hot day, while soldiers alternately beat them with the butts of rifles. "Towards the end of this performance," so concluded my informant, "we became very sick." That evening, however, the peasants proved their innocence, were unbound and allowed to crawl away.

The railway officials tell many a merry tale of the confusion and muddle, to say nothing of the discipline of the Turks when they are transporting themselves about the country by rail. It is one of the neatest tricks of the insurgents to start a fresh outbreak at absolutely the other end of the country. Not only is the whole Turkish army disorganized thereby, but the expense is enormous, since the Oriental railway declared "money down or no trains."

A special train conveying troops is preceded by a pilot engine. The idea is that the "pilot" should blow up any

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mine and save the train. This is clever enough in its way; but, as insurgents have often smilingly pointed out, the engine precedes the train by ten minutes, i.e. it leaves the station ten minutes before the advertised departure of the troops, but Orientals cannot and never will be punctual, with the result that the "pilot" is often an hour or so ahead, and ten mines could be laid with the greatest of ease. There was one time when the "pilot" came in six hours ahead, because the regiment stopped its own train at midday, got out, and cooked its dinner, oblivious to the express orders from higher quarters "to push on without delay."

Thousands of troops were guarding the line, it is true, but it was simply lack of enterprise or part of their tactics that the insurgents did not blow up every bridge and viaduct in the country. Why they did not is not for me to say, but it seemed to me unaccountable.

At eventide the Turkish soldier's courage fades with the light. On the Bulgarian borders the soldiers lock themselves in their blockhouses till daybreak, and then the Porte remonstrates severely with the Government at Sofia for aiding and abetting the insurrectionary movement. M-yes! but when crossing the Turkish border at night is as easy as crossing the road, the retort is somewhat obvious.

Similarly it is as easy to blow up any bridge or tunnel in the heart of Turkey itself.

The following little incident will explain better what I mean. It occurred not far from Monastir last August. The insurgents, more, I think, to prove their capability than anything else, had blown up a small bridge, which was as promptly repaired. As a guard there was a company of infantry under the command of a captain a few hundred

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yards away, and a little farther down the line was another small detachment commanded by a sergeant. The bridge, however, was carefully left unguarded, and the railway engineer after completing the repairs pointed out this omission to the captain.

The captain hummed and hawed till the engineer angrily told him that it was his duty to provide a guard.

"But I have too few men," pleaded the officer.

"Well, get some from the sergeant," roared the engineer very indignantly, for he wanted to get back to Monastir before dark.

"If the sergeant gives five men, I will detail another ten," said the officer, and the engineer, thinking the matter settled, climbed on the engine and went home.

At daybreak he returned and found to his very pardonable disgust, the bridge totally unprotected. As soon as it was fully daylight the soldiers of the two posts collected at the bridge, rejoicing that it had not again suffered at the hands of those thrice-accursed Christian dogs.

The engineer saw the matter in a different light, and angrily demanded of the captain why his instructions had not been carried out. He also asked him if he thought he was going to rebuild this bally bridge every day just because his men were too tender to stop out all night.

Quoth the gallant officer with pride—

"*My* ten men were ready, but the sergeant never sent his five."

The worthy non-com. became so indignant and retorted so hotly that captain and sergeant were with difficulty restrained from blows.

The confusion entailed when the troops are being moved about is almost indescribable. Empty trains are

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telegraphed for and proceed to certain stations. Here they wait, for no troops are there, till they return empty in disgust, or if the troops are there, the order is countermanded. I remember when the insurrection broke out in Razlog, some sixteen battalions were concentrated along the line at Monastir and Sorović. Suddenly four battalions left Monastir by road for Uesküb, and trains were ordered to go down to Sorović and take on several regiments to Demir-Hissar in vilayet Salonica. The railway staff worked all night putting the trains together. Next morning off they went but came back empty at night. Similarly the marching battalions were recalled when half the distance had been covered. Three days later it was all done over again, and this time carried out, dislocating the whole traffic, for I went down to Salonica *that* day, of course leaving Monastir at 2 p.m. instead of 8 a.m., and arrived at Salonica past midnight, after a most unenviable night journey spent in praying that the insurgents would not mistake my train for a troop train.

Their army maps are most inferior and the ignorance displayed by staff officers simply extraordinary.

When Krushevo was in the hands of the insurgents, several batteries of artillery were dispatched after the infantry had left to support them. They arrived four days late, because the commanding officer had mistaken the name of the town for Kirchevo two days' march in another direction.

Talking of artillery reminds me of an amusing and instructive conversation held with a certain Pacha.

One of us had seen a battery on the march and complimented the Pacha on its smart appearance.

"But," remarked another correspondent, "they never

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fire a round in practice. What would happen in the case of war?"

"Oh," responded the Pacha blandly, "the non-commissioned officers know how to handle the guns, and in war time we shall call in the men who fought them through the Greek war."

Another young artillery officer who was asked why the Turkish artillery when they once attacked a village invariably battered it to pieces, even though every one had been killed or had fled, responded—

"We are only too thankful for the chance of a little practice."

And it is precisely the same with the infantry. They never fire even blank cartridges, let alone "ball." It is most amusing, or extremely annoying if the stranger is a late sleeper, to reside in the vicinity of a barrack square or drilling ground.

At daybreak in summer drilling commences—if the commanding officer be of an energetic disposition—and in the event of firing exercise it is the buglers who blow lustily to mark "fire." The soldiers do not even ease springs at "the present." Similarly no aiming drill is practised. This may be different at Constantinople, under the auspices of foreign instructors, but in provincial garrisons, and particularly during the active insurrection, practically all drill was suspended.

As I travelled by rail once through the vilayet of Salonica, a particularly smart young lieutenant entered my compartment. He began reading a German novel, and we soon got into conversation. He told me that he had come straight from the field of operations at Razlog, and that previously he had been attached to a regiment of Russian infantry.

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Of course we talked of the fighting, and the lieutenant was exceedingly bitter against the insurgents.

"You have no idea how hard it is for me;" he said. "Just back from the law and order of Prussia, I am supposed to turn my knowledge to account with my own battalion, but as long as the insurrection lasts I am powerless. *The men won't be drilled.*"

He added that the recruits received only the barest possible instruction.

It was on the same line on an earlier occasion that I met a colonel and acting brigadier. He was to take his brigade up to Razlog the next day and was full of their praises. As it happened, he had been engaged near Monastir for the past few weeks during my stay there, so that I was able to follow his accounts fairly accurately, though he little guessed my identity.

In answer to my question if he had had much fighting, he staggered me considerably by remarking—

"We often saw a band, but we *never* fire first unless our position is very favourable. Usually we let the band depart in peace."

This confirmed what I had often heard from the insurgents themselves. Unless they were surrounded by an overwhelming force the Turks *never* attacked.

I think the story of the battle of Smilevo one of the most striking examples of this kind. A certain consul and myself succeeded in verifying it fully by comparing both the Turkish and insurgent accounts.

At the very commencement of August (1903) a force of some twelve hundred insurgents took up a very strong position on the heights round Smilevo, a village some four hours distant from Monastir. Each četa or band held some

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GUARDING THE RAILWAY.

A BARGAIN IN THE MARKET.

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more or less inaccessible crag, and the only approach for attack was up a high-lying ravine under the very rifles of the defenders. On August 2 a considerable force of Turks "reconnoitred" the insurgent position, and finding it not to their liking, returned to Monastir. Twice this daring act was repeated, though not a shot was exchanged —neither side cared to commence—and the second time the Turks were so close to the most advanced insurgent post that the latter distinctly heard an argument between two colonels.

Both insisted that the other should commence the attack, and neither would accept the onerous duty. Ultimately, on the 27th of the month, seven battalions and one battery returned, and this time it was business. The infantry deployed, firing commenced, to the great disadvantage and loss of the Turks, and then the guns got to work. Very gallantly the Turkish infantry stormed the hillsides under cover of their guns, and captured the insurgent position. But the insurgents were all gone, and not more than twenty dead bodies were found. At the first gun the insurgents had retreated in capital order, as they invariably do when artillery is available, for they never face shell fire, after defying an army corps for twenty-eight days and causing thousands of fresh troops to be poured into the vilayet.

The Turks were so annoyed that the nearest village, ill-fated Smilevo, was sacrificed to the infuriated soldiery. That episode I have told elsewhere.

There is another characteristic of the Turkish army of to-day besides their bad shooting and hatred of hand-to-hand fighting, and that is their appalling waste of ammunition. It is dangerous to witness a fight from any point, for

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bullets fly even at complete right angles, as a German officer once told me after a most unpleasant experience.

Their one idea is to blaze away and make as much noise as possible.

The attention of a high Turkish officer was once drawn to this utter lack of marksmanship and waste of good powder, but he pooh-poohed it, saying, "Our soldiers don't care for shooting; they love to use the bayonet." So they do, if the man is dead, or in a massacre, as any one will testify who has seen a man murdered in the streets by soldiers. Likewise the most gallant and fiercest charges are made—at manœuvres—when bayonets are flashed and brandished literally in the faces of the friendly foes.

Yet the Turks show the greatest reluctance to close with even the smallest handful of insurgents. Whenever a band is localized in a village, a mass of troops surround it and bombard it for hours from a respectful distance—there are always those accursed bombs to be considered.

When the insurgent fire is finally silenced, the troops close in cautiously and sack the village, usually discovering that somehow or other the little band has given them the slip.

During last August a case in point occurred at Banitsa, also in the vilayet of Monastir. The village was held by thirty-five Bulgars and successfully surrounded at daybreak by two battalions. At 11 a.m. the Turks began pouring a hail of lead into the village. Towards one o'clock the band broke out, twenty-one got away, but the other fourteen were caught in a small hollow.

For another three hours the Turks concentrated their fire on the unhappy Bulgars, and ultimately ceased at 5 p.m. Of course the little band was literally shot to pieces, probably in the first ten minutes.

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Another (this time a purely comical case) happened at Amatovo, a small station on the Uesküb-Salonica line. Close by, a band had made an extensive marsh its headquarters for many days, and the Turks getting wind of this, dispatched a small army, with guns, to effect its capture.

For a whole day the Turks bombarded that swamp with shell and rifle fire, to the detriment of the stationmaster's windows, when one shell burst too near and broke them. But the band had left the night before.

This was perhaps the most amusing episode of last year's summer campaign. Several thousand rounds of ammunition had been wasted on a barren stretch of swamp and rushes. It was more or less the same everywhere, reckless expenditure of cartridges and a minimum loss of life from this mode of fighting.

On the other hand, indiscriminate shooting is rife and accounts for many unlucky peasants. A patrol thinks nothing of "potting" a man working harmlessly and all unheeding in his field. Corpses strewed the melon-gardens and remained unburied. Riding once a short distance from Monastir, I met a gendarmerie patrol marching along the high road beguiling the monotony of the way by discharging a rifle alternately at about every hundred yards. They did not trouble to point their rifles in the air, but fired point blank across the fields, all of which were under cultivation.

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Reminiscences. IV

THE TURKISH ARMY (*continued*)

THE Turkish army is divided into various classes, as, indeed, are all Continental armies raised by conscription. The last chapter dealt practically only with the "Nizam," or regular army, the backbone of the Ottoman Empire. There are three more classes, viz., the Redifs, or reserves; Ilaves, or second-class reserves; and Mustaphis, or "Landsturm." It is true that these names are now officially abolished, and the more euphemistic term, Redif second and third class, substituted. Turkey was, as usual, very subtle in this change of names; they sound better, and a few European statesmen were hoodwinked once more. The only people who suffer are the few decent redif regiments, who naturally share the local odium caused by terming this ill-disciplined and badly-armed horde "redifs." Then, we still have the gendarmerie, or military police, a force that Europe is so thoroughly determined to reform. That they want it is obvious to any one who has studied the ways of these uniformed blackmailers, but it is like operating on a man's finger when his arm is diseased to the shoulder.

There are now a goodly number of foreign officers employed in the very laudable attempt to reform this force,

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and it will be curious to see how long the farce will last. Last summer there were only two foreign officers, Scandinavians, who were attempting this Augean task single-handed. They arrived last May. In August their first primary reform had still been carefully ignored, viz., to pay up the men. As long as the men are unpaid, or partially so, the crying evil will remain: that these protectors of life and property will help themselves wherever they go, and, in the words of the advertiser, "will see that they get it." Furthermore, the foreign officers were sternly confined to the towns, and never under any pretext whatever allowed to visit country posts, where their presence was most imperative.

The introduction of Christians into the gendarmerie was a great cruelty to these persecuted races. These unfortunate men were always in a minority to their Mahometan comrades, who made their lives a hell. In Albania they were, and are still, being ruthlessly murdered. Often have I heard these men's bitter complaints, and very pitiable it was to listen to them, predicting sooner or later their own sudden death.

Besides this, their presence was only an encumbrance to the reform officers, because, being Christians, and consequently utterly ignorant of the use of firearms, they were more than useless as armed men.

This same remark applies equally to a vast number of the redifs, second and third class. They were men originally exempted from military service in their youth now suddenly called up for active service without any previous training whatever, and at an age when to learn is an impossibility. Men of fifty and even sixty can be seen anywhere, and the average age can be put down at forty.

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SCANDINAVIAN OFFICERS OF GENDARMERIE.

REFUGEES.

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Of course many of them have possessed or handled rifles in their youth, but there have been plenty of instances, as with the Christian gendarmes, where they have not known which is the business end of the rifle just served out to them. But they make an imposing show on paper, and when we read that twenty more battalions of redifs, second class, have been mobilized in one district, and thirty more somewhere else, we pity the handful of insurgents and admire Turkey's energy. Likewise, we realize the hopelessness of little Bulgaria ever trying to conquer this mammoth. The consuls, however, think very differently, and the presence of any exceptionally large number of these official Bashibazouks in their respective towns invariably calls forth energetic remonstrances to the local governor. They are the men who will one day head the massacres, but as for fighting Bulgaria, they will only be of use if Bulgaria is conquered. Then they will eat up and murder whatever is left by the victorious army. However, there is little fear of that, but all the more for the Europeans residing in the bases.

There is something to be said for the Turkish soldier, too, be he nizam or any class redif. They are supposed to receive about 3*s.* 6*d.* a month pay. I say "supposed" advisedly, for it is very rare that they get it, in spite of all statements to the contrary. The money may have been sent from Constantinople for this purpose—and certainly I have seen orderlies removing sacks of silver from the branches of the Ottoman Bank on one or two occasions—but it never reaches the private soldier. Sometimes they are paid up a few months' arrears from the previous year, but that always leaves a goodly balance to their credit. When they are out presumably "working" the mountains

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for insurgents, they do not mind so much—there are the pleasant valleys, where many happy days may be spent in the villages with sport, food, and loot galore; but as for prolonged residence in the big towns, that is a very different thing. They may not even kill a man there, nor steal—unless they are very careful—and there are always those prying Christian dogs of consuls about, whom the law actually requires them to salute.

The only people who get paid in Turkey are the high officials through whose hands the money must pass, the Oriental Railway Company, and the army contractors. The latter require to be paid in advance, and as usual in every country, make an excellent profit. They absolutely refuse to issue a loaf of bread unless it has been paid for, and it is by no means a rare occurrence for the troops to go four or five days without rations.

That they steal openly, even breaking ranks to do so, is obvious, and, humanly speaking, excusable. This happened at Prilep whilst I was in Monastir, when a redif battalion, marching through the bazaar, deliberately broke ranks and swept the shops bare. And there are many other authenticated instances. Then, as for murder and cruelty, it is natural for a fanatical people, called away from their homes for an indefinite period of most unpleasant and dangerous work, unpaid, ill-fed, whilst their families may half-starve without the breadwinners, to vent their pent-up feelings on those they imagine to be the cause of all their sufferings—the Christian inhabitants.

Of course, this is no excuse for the bestial immorality of this depraved race, and the inhuman barbarities practised on their wretched scapegoats. Many of their deeds may never be mentioned, but they are known and proven.

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REMINISCENCES. IV

When I was at Kirk-Kilisse a Christian gendarme told me many instances of horrible cruelty, because the vilayet of Adrianople suffered even more than the others. I will select the *least* repulsive. The gendarme on duty in the town one day—he was a Greek, by the way—saw a few cartloads of wretched prisoners. In one cart he noticed that a prisoner had sunk to the floor, evidently dying or seriously ill, whilst a soldier was stamping with his booted heel on the sick man's manacled hands. The gendarme went nearer, and recognized in the moaning prisoner a brother Greek, and remonstrated with the soldier.

"Dost thou not see he is dying, and cannot get up?" he said to the soldier. "Cease torturing him."

With a look of fury the soldier paused a moment.

"Art *thou* another Christian dog? Wait, thy turn will also come." And he resumed his pastime.

This gendarme trembled when he related the story. "For," he said, "my days are numbered. He will not forget."

Admirers of the Turks and haters of the Bulgars, please note that this was a *Greek* story.

Even amongst the Turkish soldiers there are some who sicken at the sights they see. There was a young officer once employed in exterminating the Bulgars in Monastir, who threw up his commission in the army and fled, utterly horrified. He had been at Armensko.

I can quote another instance that I learnt at Adrianople from a young merchant who had been called out as a redif. He returned to his home with many pounds of silver, most of it loot from the churches.

"As long as we only looted I did not mind," he naïvely remarked; "but later the order came to kill, and then

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it was awful. The butchery absolutely sickened me."

Oddly enough, England has no representative at Adrianople. It is a great pity, and a mistake I hope that will be rectified. The result of this omission, as far as I am concerned, was that my accounts of the horrors committed in that vilayet were the only ones discredited by our Foreign Office. As long as my telegrams were confirmed by consular reports I was believed; but had I wished to stay longer in Turkey after my Adrianople reports, it would have been impossible. The Porte would have secured my expulsion, as I subsequently learned. Yet all my information was gleaned from the Greeks, and it was a Greek schoolmaster who told me one of my most discredited stories.

He swore to having seen Albanian soldiers displaying pickled women's breasts and ears as trophies when they were on their way home. This horrible statement I sought to shake by most cunning cross-questioning on two occasions, but he remained firm, even repeating the soldiers' remarks. And this Greek even admitted a hatred for the Bulgars.

Adrianople is a large vilayet, and the chief town, where a few foreign consuls reside, is on the confines. At large towns like Kirk-Kilisse and Tirnova there are no European consuls, but simply a few consular agents, native Greeks of the towns.

Consequently, the Turkish soldiery had a free hand, and even embarrassed the local authorities, as witness the hasty removal of the Albanians.

Throughout the vilayet the soldiers deserted in bands and constituted themselves into highwaymen. This was of course after the land had been gutted. These highwaymen soldiers respected no one, and Mahometans were robbed

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as well as Christian wayfarers. I remember an old Turk, a well-to-do merchant at Adrianople, on hearing that some cartloads of his merchandise on the way to the city bazaar had been looted and destroyed by insurgents, clasping his hands over his head and exclaiming—

"It is not the insurgents who are doing these things, but the soldiers."

There is another weak point to-day in the Turkish army, and that is the officers' corps. The old fighting lieutenant of former times who rose from the ranks has largely disappeared, and exists only in the more deserted garrisons. All new vacancies are filled by cadets from the Military School at Constantinople. Some of them may possess more scientific knowledge, but physically, and doubtless morally, they are characteristic specimens of the modern Turk. The fine old race, the Beys, are no more. They have been beggared or absorbed into Constantinople. These pasty-faced, weak-kneed young gentlemen are their offspring, rotten with vice, inherited and acquired. Many have had no training whatever. I saw scores of them arriving daily in Monastir, resplendent in new uniforms and accoutrements.

Europe by no means realizes the deterioration of the Turk, which is but the natural result of centuries of corruption and bad government. I have quoted the remarks of a Prussian trained lieutenant whose men would not drill, and of the war-grizzled brigadier who never fired first. Let me add two more examples.

It was at Kirk-Kilisse that I was joined by several young officers in the hotel dining-room one evening. They began relating stories of their prowess in the field in terms of most boastful idiocy. One, fresh from the Bulgarian border, told of the cowardice of the Bulgar frontier guards; how,

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had he occasion to speak with the officer, the Bulgar came trembling and with shaking knees. I greatly doubted this statement at the time, and later, in Bulgaria, had ample opportunity of proving its nonsense.

If I may digress a moment, I would wish to point out another falling off of the Turk. Many of them now drink wine, for the most part strictly forbidden by the Prophet, and drink it like Christians. This I consider a most significant sign of the times. But to return.

I once spoke to an elderly Turkish captain at Adrianople on the railway. As usual, I asked him what he thought of Turkey's chance against Bulgaria. He smiled indulgently.

"How long will it take you to reach Sofia?" I continued.

"Six hours," he replied. (The direct express takes twelve.)

"But," quoth I, to lead him on, "there are three million Russians there to help Bulgaria."

"Then we shall take twelve hours!"

By the way, it may also not be commonly known that a vast number of officers can neither read nor write. They receive the title of "Aga." "Effendi" signifies a man who can do both, and is by no means common.

Most of the high commands, or one may safely say all, are held by Palace favourites, men, as a colleague once neatly put it, who have learnt tactics in the palace gardens. These men know absolutely nothing of the country they are suddenly sent to command, and have no military knowledge.

Nazir Pacha was a striking example of this kind. To sit and talk an hour with him was a trying ordeal, though he had spent three years in a Prussian regiment of the Guards

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in bygone days. His favourite remark was that yesterday, or the day before, as the case might be, he had dispatched so and so many rebels to Paradise. He did not even lie as neatly as Hilmi Pacha, for instance, but roughly and clumsily, like the butcher he was.

There was another Pacha holding a high military post at Uesküb, who got drunk regularly every evening on champagne, and played cards, cheating so obviously and clumsily that no European would play with him. He was, I believe, the youngest general in the Turkish army.

Good men, up to their work, and honest, are invariably exiled sooner or later, but, after all, these facts are common property with those who know Turks to-day.

The lack of cohesion and organization is most amply illustrated in the officers' uniforms. Each clothes himself according to taste, in brown, blue, or black tunics, in white canvas or khaki. Once I saw an officer tastefully attired in a yellow silk tunic, of which he was immensely proud. Likewise, their swords are highly interesting collections, ranging from a modern German regulation sword to the ancient scimitar. Doubtless, readers whose knowledge of Turkey is confined to Constantinople will imagine I am exaggerating, but the troops stationed there are Turkey's *corps d'élite*.

It will be remembered that when the German Emperor visited Palestine, the local troops received an entirely new outfit, at great cost to the Porte.

Many of the redif battalions have no officers at all, and it is extremely hard to get them. As for the Albanian regiments, when they are occasionally mobilized, Turkish officers absolutely refuse now to serve with them. A Greek consul once related to me, after returning from a tour

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of inspection in Kaza Kastoria, how he had heard an Albanian regiment singing songs every evening, deriding their officers. Also, I heard of many cases where they murdered them.

When they are moved about by train, the engine drivers, who are compelled to wear fezes, as are also the brakesmen, have instructions to go through large towns at full speed, and one told me, on one occasion his "train" became so unruly and threatening that he quietly uncoupled his engine and left his burden standing in a desolate spot.

There are hosts of these anecdotes, ranging from the greatest insubordination to the other extreme of long-suffering. The latter instances, however, only occur with the Anatolian troops, and with even these long-sufferers there are often signs of mutiny.

Before long, perhaps ere these lines are printed, Europe will have an opportunity of judging the merits of the Turkish army of to-day. They will fight, and probably in some places fight hard, but they will make a hopeless muddle of anything like combined action, and a well disciplined, homogeneous army will walk through them.

The last war with Greece did much to rob the Turkish soldier of his fanaticism, odd as this statement may appear at first sight. So many thousands of the troops died from sickness, lack of nourishment, and needless exposure, that the others have not forgotten it. To die on the field of battle is for the Mahometan an inducement to fight, though this characteristic is less apparent to-day than formerly; but to rot away in hospital is quite another thing. There is no guarantee of Paradise there, and the percentage of the faithful who presumably went straight to heaven during

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that war was very small. And on these things the Turks ponder much.

To conclude, I will quote just one more conversation held with a common Turkish soldier in a tramcar in Salonica. He held in his arms the top of a shower bath, and, seeing my curiosity, he addressed me in English. After explaining the mechanism of the "shower," he commented on the badly paved street through which we were passing.

"Now, in London there would be a double-lined tramway and good streets. Here it is very bad. Everything is bad in Turkey."

Noticing my increasing surprise, he informed me that he had been a fireman on an English steamer plying between England and Turkey, but had been recalled for his military service, much to his disgust.

"England is a great country," he concluded. "Look at their government, and"—he was preparing to descend now—"look what she has made out of Egypt."

That's just it. Every educated Turk has Egypt ever before him, and compares. He also ponders.

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What I saw in Macedonia

MONASTIR. I

VIEWED from a little distance, Monastir presents a smiling picture of green trees, above which tower a few minarets. Scarcely a house can be distinguished, except an occasional glimpse of a red-tiled roof and little blue spirals of smoke ascending into the clear mountain atmosphere. Great hills rise gently from this bed of green, with groups of tents dotted on the slopes, and across the still air comes the sound of bugles. Far away lurid flames leap up, burning fiercely and vividly against the sombre background, betraying the beloved handiwork of the Turkish soldier. Even the faint and distant boom of cannon can be heard, and to-morrow we shall be told of the extermination of another band already killed thrice over. Along the broad and dusty avenue a great concourse of people is streaming towards the little station on the very outskirts of the town, and thither we gallop our horses, for the distant scream of a locomotive can be already heard heralding the approach of the Salonica train, with its daily load of misery and vice. Turkish officers in every variety and extreme of military uniforms and smartness, ragged soldiers, stately kavasses keeping an ever watchful eye upon their masters, one or two Europeans, and a motley array of porters throng the platform as very slowly the long train rolls in. A dozen closely

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barred vans follow the engine and pass us, till the three or four carriages draw up opposite the station-house, crowded with gendarmes, soldiers, redifs, all fully armed, who noisily descend, jostling the second-class passengers, consisting of officers and officials. Towards the first van marches a squad of zaptiehs, and it is unlocked, disclosing a mass of wild, unkempt faces, blinking piteously in the sudden light. A few sharp commands, a push or a thrust with a rifle-butt, and its contents are disgorged—slowly, because the men therein are chained to each other, or have their arms tightly bound behind their backs, and they are very weak from days of starvation. Some claw at rude bundles, all their worldly belongings, but most are barely clad in rags. They are Bulgarian peasants whose villages have been burnt, their wives and children murdered or driven into the mountains to starve, whither they had followed till hunger has driven them once more into the valleys and into the hands of the soldiers. There were more when they first gave themselves up, but those were weak, and could not keep up on that long march to the nearest railway-station, in spite of the bayonet prods and beatings with the rifle-butts.

An officer explains to us that these are insurgents captured in a recent fight, but we know better. Poor wretches, *they* never possessed a rifle, else they would not be here and in this plight. Few armed insurgents are ever captured alive. In a long straggling line they totter out on to the road, mere caricatures of mankind, a bundle of bones strung together by a covering of skin, towards the inferno called the prison. How many will ever emerge alive before they are called, weeks or months hence, to the mockery of trial? Probably most of them, for they are hard to kill.

But there are other vans not yet opened: a moan breaks

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THE GUARDHOUSE, MONASTIR.

(Where the Russian Consul Kvakowski was shot.)

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from them occasionally, more distinct now that the babel of voices has streamed out towards the town. Our continued presence is obviously unwelcome, and we diplomatically withdraw to a point of vantage well hidden in the trees. Here we see the vans unloaded, and the inmates carried to a neighbouring shed till nightfall, when the ambulances will come and carry them to the overcrowded military hospital. They are mostly wounded soldiers, with here and there a mutilated Bulgarian, saved from a lingering but more merciful death on the hills for some reason, perhaps to give information against his comrades or as a trophy. Thoughtfully we mount our horses and ride slowly down the avenue, past the exercising-ground facing the huge barracks. Bugles are blowing incessantly, for the Turkish soldier loves noise, and shouts cleave the air as they proclaim their allegiance to the Padisha at the close of each day.

Half-way a small guard-house breaks the line of trees and the sentry in a slovenly manner "presents arms," for his instructions are to salute all consuls, as we ride by with slightly accelerated pace. There are so few Europeans here beside the consuls that we are invariably saluted as such. It was only a few short weeks ago that the Russian consul drove past this spot and met his awful fate. From this very guard-house came the fatal shot, and it was under this tree that he fell, and the zaptieh smashed in his skull as he lay. On those two trees, next to the guard-house, the murderer and his comrade (whose only crime was that he did not prevent the other shooting) were hanged a few days later, calling to the soldiers to save them, saying, "Ye made us do the deed: save us if ye be men." On the low branches, scarcely high enough to swing them clear, they were strangled, and Holy Russia was avenged. A few hundred

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yards farther we pass the military bakehouse and its guard. It is the first house of the town, and the place where more shots were fired at the dead consul's carriage as it drove furiously by.

The main street is crowded as we enter it. Citizens, soldiers, zaptiehs, one and all Turks, enjoying the brief spell of twilight ere darkness sends them hurrying to their homes. Not one European headgear is to be seen, either in the streets or in the open-air *cafés*. We are alone amongst this mob of fanatics. Patrols of armed soldiers slouch past incessantly; at every street-corner stand sentries, who unwillingly come to "the attention" as we approach. A feeling of uncanniness, of some hidden danger, possesses us—a feeling that we can never quite shake off in Monastir, for there is talk of Christian massacres in the air, of murder, though we jest about it at the consulates over coffee and cigarettes. Yet we have suffered no inconvenience, and, thanks to a little care, we have avoided jostling one of the uniformed Bashibazouks, and have so far escaped insult.

A great clatter comes down the ill-paved street, and a carriage surrounded by mounted gendarmes rattles past. Inside sits a grave-faced bearded man, clad most correctly in frock coat, but with fez. It is the Inspector-General of Reforms, Hilmi Pacha. He salaams gracefully out of the window, but he does not smile as affably as usual. Only this day he has informed our consul that there is a plot afoot to murder either him or us, and he is much grieved because we have responded, declaring our unbelief that it is a *Bulgarian* plot. Also, he is pained at our accusations of Christian massacres, and that, in spite of his courteous and plausible explanations, we still believe the Turkish soldiers capable of such atrocities, and supply comfortable British

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breakfast-tables with the accounts thereof. Men who daily sit with us in secret places, pass with scarcely a glance of recognition. We likewise ignore them, for everywhere there are spies, and we know that a careless "good evening" would be enough to send them to prison and to banishment.

Yet all is orderly and quiet. A stranger might well imagine himself in a most well-conducted Turkish city, for he does not know the sights hidden by the prison, the hospital walls, or in the Bulgarian quarter.

"You see how exaggerated are all the reports of disturbances and cruelties in Monastir," remarked Nazir Pacha suavely, a day or two before, when we admitted the orderliness on the streets. "Now, confess that you expected to see very different things with us."

"In spite of all that we had heard, your Excellency, we did not expect to see what we have seen," we responded truthfully. "There is a very false impression in Europe as to the doings here, and we are doing our best to correct it." His Excellency beamed with pleasure, and handed us another cigarette.

MONASTIR. II

Painfully and slowly the old woman replaces the evil-smelling bandages upon her grey head. She had just insisted on showing us a terrible scalp wound wantonly given her at the burning of Smilevo by a Turkish soldier, where the only crime of the villagers had been their vicinity to the hills infested by "brigands." Another old woman had begun to sob violently—one of us reminds her of a son whom she saw hacked to pieces; but the younger women do not weep or moan. Only one, half girl, half woman,

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sobbed softly as she told of the soldiers who tore the child from her arms and tossed it into the flames of her burning home.

We are in a suburb of Monastir, a collection of houses scattered unevenly up the side of a steep hill bordering on a Turkish cemetery. It is densely packed with human beings, who may not leave the tiny walled-in courtyards before the houses, as many as ten families in one small room. The smell of overcrowding cries powerfully to the heavens, pervading the sweet fresh mountain air even at a distance.

A very few men are amongst this crowd in a somewhat larger court than the rest, which we have chosen at random and entered. We had heard that the victims of Smilevo had come, and that a few of them, thanks to the good offices of the Austrian consul, had been allowed to remain. The rest, many hundred families, are living in the open, scattered in groups upon the plain, without covering and without warm clothing, depending on the charity of the equally poor villagers for bread. God send them help before the winter comes! But after all, what is their lot compared to those in the mountains, where the nights are biting cold and not a village is left standing in the valleys? What are those poor wretches doing in the Ochrida and Dibra districts, where sixty villages are burnt, and, as a consul curtly put it, "8,000 families, reckoned at the average of five persons to the family, are now homeless and entirely destitute in the mountains?"

Smilevo[1] is but *one* instance of *ninety*. Soldiers had come fresh from a defeat in the hills, and had suddenly surrounded the flourishing village, setting fire to the outer ring

[1] The village of Smilevo was destroyed by Turkish soldiers and Bashibazouks on August 28, and over 200 people massacred.

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IN A BULGAR VILLAGE.

REFUGEES.

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of houses. Then, as the frightened inmates rushed into the streets, the shooting began; and whilst the soldiers killed and tormented, the Bashibazouks ransacked each house, igniting it when this work was done. Ah, how merrily they ran to and fro, screaming wildly as the circle of flames grew smaller! What sport to the harassed soldiers to kill slowly and with impunity! Verily 'tis better fun than being dynamited in the hills. They take the sword-bayonets now, for fear of shooting each other, and laugh as the pile of dead grows higher. Into the flames with the infants! it is good to hear the mothers shriek, and to cut them down as they run blindly at the butchers, armed only with their teeth and nails. Now it is enough—every house is in flames, and not a thing of value left to the survivors except what they stand up in, huddled together in a paralyzed group outside. Some have run for the hills, a few of the men have escaped the shower of bullets, but most are dotting the wasted crops.

The soldiers, tired even of this work, leave them, and there they stand, robbed in a few short hours of father, mother, husband, wife, or children, their home, and everything that was theirs. And these are but a handful of survivors that crowd around us talking freely now that they are satisfied we are not Turkish spies, showing us pieces of charred bags, skirts, and other articles of clothing cut and slashed to tatters by the bayonets of the soldiers. Their lot, miserable as it is, is heaven compared with thousands of others. Here they are fed by the charity of their neighbours, their wounds tended by the good Sisters of Mercy, and they do not live in hourly fear of another massacre, though each Christian in Monastir knows that even this eventuality is possible—nay, contemplated. It is very different from the

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hell on the mountains and on the plains, where the wounds are festering and the only food is often grass and water.

Groups of pretty little orphans are shown us before we depart, taking our way through the Bulgarian quarter proper. The same sights, the same stories, the same misery is hidden behind every wall—not only from Smilevo, but from a dozen other villages too. We have listened to them also, and heard the wearying repetition of fiendish acts of cruelty, too awful ever to tell in the columns of a refined press, and of acts of the basest treachery. It is no wonder that the majority of the refugees prefer to die in the mountains rather than trust to the promises of amnesty in Hilmi Pacha's latest proclamation. It *may* have been issued in all good faith, but the soldiers have no wish to escort these feeble remnants to the nearest towns, so the men prefer to see their wives and daughters die of more merciful starvation than in the hands of the most brutal soldiery in the world. Some of the more credulous men have already given themselves up, and been shot down in batches. Those still left in the mountains will join the bands after they have buried their families, and wait for the happy chance when a Turkish soldier falls into their hands, so that they can face their enemies with a Mauser and belt of cartridges.

Ah! it is a sad, sad story, this, of the extermination of the Christians in vilayet Monastir, under the unbelieving and unfeeling eyes of Europe, which once rose in righteous wrath at tales not more horrible. It was *one* massacre in Bulgaria that set Europe in a blaze a quarter of a century ago. Now a dozen equally terrible only leaves us desiring the introduction of "the Reforms!" Nay more, our philanthropists are seeking to prove the Bulgarians guilty of equal atrocities, which are mostly absolutely false. Have

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you, good readers, ever tried to imagine yourselves for one moment in these poor wretches' position? Did you ever think of your sweet wives and tender daughters in the hands of—no! it isn't even to be mentioned, is it? Yet I have seen these poor, rough, half-civilized men weep like little children when they have *remembered*.

But grant me pardon for this digression. We are in Monastir, and have just given a few piastres to a venerable priest clad in a tattered robe, and he is calling down the blessings of God on Europe, whom he sees represented in us. He hastily leaves us, darting up a side alley as swiftly as his feeble limbs will carry him, for a patrol of soldiers is coming down the narrow street. The police-officer scowls at us, and will report that those accursed Giaours have been once more amongst those lying curs of refugees, and the smiling chief of police will gnash his teeth in impotent rage that he cannot drive us from his district and escape the ire of the Sublime Porte. Poor man! he has done his utmost. He has sought to terrify us with hidden threats of murder, in vain has he examined our passport for one flaw in the *visé*, and the cordon of guards around the town has been trebly warned never to let us pass. But he cannot make us go, neither can he blind us nor rob us of our hearing.

There in the great white house, the Greek hospital, are perhaps the worse sights of all, except in the prison. It is full of victims, Greeks and Servians and Wallachians, but, charitable as it is, it draws the line at Bulgarians. There many tortured remnants from Armensko, from Biloshi, and from Smerdes are to be found. We have seen them all, and left sick and with creeping flesh. There was that wretched woman with a shoulder cleft to the lung, and the woman with protruding brain, her skull smashed by five sabre

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cuts, and her left hand lopped off as she tried to snatch her child from the butchers. In those rooms are little children riddled by bullets and cut with knives. These are some of the proofs saved by the Almighty to testify against the bloody Turk, and recording some of the final episodes, we trust, of the Moslem in Europe.

And we who had seen these things were told in the Konak by the general commanding the troops in vilayet Monastir that the duties of the Turkish soldier were very strenuous. They had three duties to perform: firstly, to capture or disperse the bands; secondly, to extinguish the flames of the burning villages; and, thirdly, to escort the women and children to places of safety.[1]

IN UESKÜB TO-DAY

"Dur!" (Halt!)

"Kim dir o?" (Who goes there?)

"Geri!" (Go back!)

A dim figure can be faintly distinguished in the gloom, that of a Turkish soldier. If his commands—which he will probably round off with a vicious *Köpek* (Dog!)—are not obeyed on the instant, you will see his rifle come down to "the ready," and the magazine of his Mauser will click ominously. We know that he has stringent orders not to fire under any circumstances on a European; but the man is an Anatolian, totally savage, and of imperfect intelligence. What comfort is it to us to know that he would be hanged with much pomp after our Ambassador at the Porte has energetically demanded retribution for our murder?

[1] Remark actually made by Nazir Pacha to the writer, September 6, 1903.

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No, it is better to obey, and quickly, seeking a doubtful comfort in the knowledge that to-morrow we will report the insult of "Dog!" to our perspiring consul, who will duly relate to us the apologies offered by the Vali.

"Better not go out at night," remarks the consul; "anything can happen at these times, and men are shot with scant ceremony."

Uesküb does not inspire confidence either by day or night. Through the crowded bazar, straggling up the hill beyond the Vardar to the vast half-ruined fortress on the summit, jostle an appalling number of armed men in the Zouave uniform of the redifs. They have been hastily called in for military service from the villages far and near. Their belts bristle with cartridges, and whether sitting, standing, or walking their rifles are inseparable.

Those savage-looking men in the merest semblance of a uniform, with white skull-caps of felt upon their heads, are Albanians. They are armed now for the first time with Mausers, and they handle their new treasure with obvious affection, their eyes wandering the while towards a group of accursed Christians. Verily these men add not to the peaceful scene, so gay in its Oriental colouring.

Groups of ragged soldiers, their faces burnt nigh black, are to be seen here and there: these are the Asiatic troops sent to save us from a sudden attack from the local soldiery, who are all but out of hand, and whose discipline is nil. Thank Heaven that each day trains bear off hundreds of these men to lonely stations on the Salonica line.

As we retrace our steps to the consular quarter and railway-station, we pass the newly established branch of the Ottoman Bank, where nervous clerks sit sweating in the heat. Soldiers stand on guard at every entrance, and

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opposite is the city guard-house itself; yet the bank officials are direly afraid, for the Bulgarians have sworn to blow it up sooner or later, and there are some sitting in the office who saw the shattered remains of the bank at Salonica.

"Good-morning!" says the genial director; but he does not smile when we joke him on the ever-present dangers. "I am surprised to find myself alive each morning I awake," he remarks, with an unconscious Irishism. Then we cross the picturesque old bridge, and pause involuntarily to consider the beauties of the mountains which surround the pretty town. It is a wild scene, perfectly in keeping with our feelings. At our feet, upon the dry bed of the river, now a comparatively tiny stream rushing through the centre arches, is a group of tents, that of the guard of the bridge. See, as we bend over the parapet, a sentry waves his arm at us, and a hoarse cry comes up, bidding us not loiter on the bridge. His orders are strict. Who knows but what we may not be desperate men about to drop a bomb at his feet, blowing him and the bridge to pieces?

We pass on, and a dapper young man accosts us, immaculately attired in the height of Western fashion. He is the secretary of a certain Balkan consulate, and, in spite of his light laugh, there is an air of uneasiness about him impossible to conceal. He knows that the Turks have sworn to murder him and his consul on the first attempt at an outrage by the bands, and indeed every European realizes that his life will be worth nothing when the bombs are thrown.

He knows that every detail of the massacre has already been planned at those nocturnal meetings in the mosques. Each house is marked, and every true Mahometan knows his rendezvous and—his duty.

"Will it come to it?" every man asks himself; and our

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friend sighs as we twit him unfeelingly on his so thinly veiled anxiety.

"The consuls declare there is no danger. The Vali pooh-poohs the rumours, so why this argument?" we say, tapping his revolver, which bulges in his pocket.

"That is what they *must* say," he answers gravely.

Poor fellow! he has a young wife far away, and that unmans him.

"Take care of thy master," we call to the huge kavass, clad in gorgeous raiment, and with two great silver-mounted revolvers in his sash.

He salutes us Turkish fashion, pausing a moment to say—

"Seven years have I eaten the bread of my masters, and my duty has been but to stand at their door. The time is coming when perhaps I shall *earn* my wages."

What strange men are these!—giants in stature with the arms of their adopted country carried proudly in their fez; men who but a few years ago would have been the first to head a massacre of the infidels—now in their pay and ready to sacrifice their lives in their service. It is something to see one of these men challenged at night, and to hear his scornful answer "Kavass!" as he stalks past the threatening rifles of the sentries. And what is more, his countrymen, be they Turks or Albanians, fear him more than his pale-faced master; for they know those great revolvers projecting from his sash are for prompt use, and that the folds hide two or three more such deadly weapons.

Hark! music is approaching, weird and shrill, and from the fort on the hill comes a cloud of dust. Let us hurry to the station, for it is a regiment of Albanians leaving for the south. Taking a position of vantage we watch them swing in through the narrow gates. First, the band of an Asiatic

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regiment straggling along with a mere pretence of formation, playing lustily—all clarionets, trombones, cymbals, and drums. Then a battalion of Anatolians, sent ostensibly as a guard of honour, but in reality to check any ebullition of feeling on the part of the mob of fierce men who follow them; rifles carried anyhow at the slope, bayonets stuck in ragged sashes as they carry their handjars or yataghans at home, their belongings stuffed into rude sacks upon their backs, clad in the mere resemblance of a uniform—evidently the cast-off clothes of the already disreputable Anatolians—and the characteristic white skull-caps of their native mountains.

A string of cattle-vans awaits them, and into these they storm, struggling, pushing, and cursing, their officers jostled and ignored, till each wagon seems packed, and still a few score men are left yelling on the platform. Slowly these forsaken ones are absorbed in the low row of vans, and all is ready for departure. The pilot-engine has left, to spring any mine that may be awaiting this harvest; but there is a ceremony still to be performed.

A few bars by the band, and the Colonel raises his hand. "Long live the Padisha!" shout the Albanians lustily; the Anatolian battalion "presents arms," and every Turk touches his breast, his mouth, and his forehead. See the long line of hands flashing upwards like a wave! Twice is this repeated; the engine whistles shrilly, and to the tune of the "Doppel Adler March," comically inappropriate, translated into Turkish music, the long train moves slowly out of the station.

Crack!—a puff of blue smoke rises from a van, another and another. Within a few seconds the train is veiled in a blue haze, as the men empty their rifles in a parting fusillade *into the town*.

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THE BAND.

THE ALBANIANS.

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Then the Anatolians march back to the barracks. In vain we search the ranks for one good face, one handsome man. It is not a pleasant sensation to know that our lives depend on them.

A young Austrian meets us at our hotel.

"By the Lord! I nearly got a pill," he says breathlessly, for he is very young; "struck the wall a foot away. Come and see the marks of the other bullets."

THE TRIP TO SALONICA

"The one great thing to admire in England," said the Turkish officer as we stood together in the corridor of the Uesküb-Salonica train, "is the lack of fanaticism. No country can be great that allows religious frenzy to guide its actions."

I offered no comment, which was superfluous, but I marvelled greatly at such a remark from the lips of a Turk, who was now hanging on the footboard of the carriage. He was in charge of a section of the line, and whenever the tents of the guards appeared, which they did every two or three minutes, he opened the door of the carriage and finally disappeared. Conversation was consequently disjointed, and the intervals I spent in praying that he might not lose his hold, and in admiring the scenery. There are few trips so grandly beautiful as the run from Uesküb, beside the rushing Vardar, towards Salonica: vast gorges, deep ravines, bridges and never-ending tunnels, steep mountains towering above each side of the river, only surpassed in Macedonia by the still finer line to Monastir. And just now a railway trip possesses attractions to the adventurous spirit somewhat akin to the feelings of a racing automobilist. He can

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speculate at every bridge whether the train will successfully cross; and in the darkness of each tunnel, if he is of an imaginative turn of mind, he can fancy that he hears the sudden roar of dynamite and the collapse of the mass of rock and earth above him. No train has passed this way since yesterday, and in spite of the formidable show of troops occupying every point of vantage along the line, stories told of their cowardice at night do not inspire confidence. The friendly conductor will point out spidery viaducts where mines have been discovered at the nick of time, and even the most courageous traveller will shudder when he looks down into those gloomy depths.

If we are fearsome, it is nothing to what the ragged soldiers feel at night, when they are afraid to shoot lest they should hit the comrades at their side on the coigns of vantage on the heights. They have been dynamited repeatedly of late, and tents blown to ribbons and shattered corpses look very dreadful in the morning. No wonder they run, and are found by the railway engineers at daybreak hiding pitifully in the maize-fields or up to their necks in the Vardar. Fortunately for us and them, the bands content themselves at present with mere scares. If they meant business, there would not be a bridge or tunnel left intact in the whole of Macedonia, in spite of the battalions who guard them so well by day. At every station we pull up for a wearisome wait, whilst the soldiers crowd round the train and inspect the passengers. A few peasants get in or out, officers exchange greetings with comrades in charge of the line. Then the bell tinkles, and off we go again past the endless row of tents and their slumbering, slovenly occupants. Here and there a sentry presents arms as we roll past.

At Demirkapa I meet our old friends, the regiment of

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Albanians, who fired a *feu-de-joie* into Uesküb as they steamed out of the station, and here I alight for much-desired refreshment. The Albanians have begun well; they arrived only last night, yet they have burnt a village already, and we can see the smoke from the smouldering ruins rising over the top of the little hill. They are lying all about the station, as villainous and cruel a lot of men as could be wished even by Turkey. They are resting from their labours now, and the buxom landlady who serves my meal curses their presence in no measured language. She is only too ready to give me the details of last night's doing, for not a wink has she slept through the long hours of darkness. The shots, the yells, and the despairing screams found each an echo in her motherly heart. "As for murders," she runs on as I bolt my food, for time is strictly limited, "why, we hear of them with no more feeling now than when my maid tells of a hen laying an egg. The soldiers shoot the peasants down in the fields as they work, with no more ado than if they were rats. Why, sir, I saw five Bulgarians beaten here on this very platform two days ago, because they asked the officer who had impressed them into working on the railway to be allowed to return to their village for one day to gather in the remains of their crops. And he had them bastinadoed till their feet ran with blood. Ah! if I had never hated the Turks before, I did at *that* sight."

"And have you no fear of yourselves, alone amongst this crowd of murderers?"

The good woman shrugs her ample shoulders. "Every European in the country will be massacred ere long. It is only a question of time. Pleasant journey, sir, and safe arrival," she calls after me, as I make a dash for the already moving train.

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Travelling is slow—slower than ever now, and 'tis evening as the train glides across the plain of Salonica, with the glimpse of blue sea beyond. Passports undergo their minute inspection for the fifth time that day, and passengers are at liberty to go to the hotel they have selected and mentioned to the police-officer. Through the densely crowded streets we rattle, overtaking primeval tramcars, past the ruins of the Ottoman Bank, grim relic of still vividly remembered horrors, till we alight at the fine hotel on the quay. Hundreds of well-dressed men and women are enjoying the evening breeze after the tropical heat of the day, the fez predominating, it is true, but still the effect is European. It is hard to realize that this town of merchant-palaces, fine cafés, with its luxurious club, is part and parcel of terror-stricken Macedonia; that these smart loungers start at the banging of a door, the result of months of nervous tension. A few days' sojourn here will convince us of that, when the cry for foreign warships is repeated for the hundredth time. At every corner stand sentries with loaded rifles, patrols march to and fro, and the narrow, noisome alleys hidden behind the houses throng with Turkish riff-raff. Every bank and public building is strongly guarded, and soldiers, half-starving amidst this mixture of opulence and misery, beg from door to door. It is not hard to read the thoughts of these men: it is written on their faces as they watch the sleek merchants and their wives and pretty daughters driving by, how each is longing for the time when bombs shall be thrown once more. There is little doubt of what will happen then, unless the British warships arrive in time.

After dinner we stroll to "the Alhambra," and listen to the band, watching the moon's soft rays dancing on the

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SALONICA.

A TURKISH PATROL

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waters of the bay. And our talk is not of music but of the latest news from the mountains—of trains blown up, and skirmishes on the very outskirts of the town. We discuss the probable plans of Sarafoff and the projected rising in this vilayet to the strains of a Viennese valse, whilst to a selection from "Faust" one tells how the bombs were thrown in this very garden. He tells us only too vividly of the sudden darkness and the awful crash that followed, of the smash of glass, and the screams of the wounded. Another caps the story, how he was arrested that night and threatened till dawn by soldiers, who haled him to their camp; how he was bound and beaten, and robbed of his last piastre.

"My nerve is gone since that night," he concludes, "and I can never pass a soldier now, even in broad daylight, without a creeping sensation down my back. I fear a sudden bullet."

And as we return to our comfortably appointed hotel we catch ourselves glancing hastily over our shoulders when we pass a crouching sentry in the darkness of his corner.

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A Morning's Sightseeing in Monastir

"THIS is the hospital," remarked our Jew guide, as he led us into a fine garden before a large and not ungainly building. Indeed there was no doubt about its character when we entered the main hall of the Greek Hospital of Monastir.

Clean and orderly, a large, airy pharmacy to the right, offices to the left, and pervading everywhere that unmistakable hospital atmosphere.

A young doctor receives us, and assures us that there will be no difficulty whatever in obtaining permission to inspect the wards.

"In fact," he says with a smile, "my permission is quite enough. We wish the correspondents to see some of our cases."

"It is just those cases we wish to see," we respond with an answering smile.

And we pass upstairs to the "Accident Wards."

We must resemble an official commission as we enter the first large and airy ward, full of men and boys, swathed for the most part in ominous bandages and plaster. A look of fear and unspoken anxiety appears on the faces of the patients, not even quieted when they see us without the fez; moreover our note-book evidently does not inspire confidence.

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Who all these worthy gentlemen are who accompany us we ourselves do not know, but ultimately they develop into two or three doctors, the apothecary, and the male nurses. They are all communicative and technical, too much so in some cases, and explain the various cases with brevity, reading from the cards above each bed.

We halt at the side of a yellow-faced, under-sized boy, and a doctor throws back the bedclothes, showing a knee in a plaster-of-Paris case.

"Elias Velian," he reads, "fifteen years of age, and native of Biloshi. Mauser bullet through the left knee, shattering the knee-cap. Cripple for life. Greek nationality."

"A boy, thirteen years old"—we are beside the next little patient—"shot through both hips by Mauser bullet at Smerdes."

Poor little fellow, he looks pitifully at us as we pass on to the next little sufferer, a year younger still.

"Philip Jolam, twelve years old. One of the survivors from Armensko. Mauser bullets through right hand and right foot. Left leg shattered by a Martini bullet."

"You are aware," remarks another doctor, "that the Nizams alone are armed with Mausers, and the Redifs and Bashibazouks with Martinis?"

We nod.

"Also that only officers possess swords?" he continued. "You will see the meaning of this in the female ward."

"Yes," we answer. There were no cavalry employed in these or any massacres.

And now we stand beside a young man from Armensko, with shattered thigh and shoulder.

"Tell us how thy life was saved," we ask.

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He looks at the doctors, half fearfully, half questioningly. They speak to him encouragingly, saying we are his friends, and mean him well.

"When I fell the Turks would have killed me quite," he began shyly, "but a man fell dead upon me, and saved me from the bayonets. He was my father."

We question him further, and, gathering confidence, he tells us of the approach of the Turkish troops after their defeat by insurgents on the hills, how the priest, a young and handsome man (afterwards killed and namelessly ill-used), together with the elders of the village, went out to meet them, offering hospitality and rest. But other soldiers had reached the village from the rear, and commenced firing shots. It was the signal.

"They said afterwards that Bulgarians were in the village and firing on them. But it was a lie. We were all Greeks, and the men who fired behind the village were soldiers sent to do this. We saw them."

"And then?"

"We fled back to our houses; many of us fell; but here we found no shelter. The soldiers set fire to our houses, and as we ran out we were bayoneted on the streets or shot down in the fields. When I fell I was in the midst of the village, and saw the soldiers murdering, plundering, and violating our women. There was a girl with five bullet wounds—I counted them afterwards—outraged by three soldiers, and then she died. Some of the little children were cut down by swords; many had four and five wounds; twenty-eight we counted, of whom four died."

"But only the officers had swords?"

"Yes, the officers helped; the rest were Anatolian and Albanian soldiers."

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He sinks back, and the doctors motion us to move on. The man had spoken listlessly and without excitement, but there was something in his eyes which said more than the bare words.

We are led into a small room beyond, where lies a little boy of twelve, another of Armensko's survivors. His head is swathed in bandages, and he is as one dead. Indeed we think it, so waxen is his face, but the doctor shakes his head.

"Bullet through the skull," he says laconically, "but he is dying fast. Probably end of this week."

(N.B.—The next time I visited the hospital he was buried.)

In silence we leave the little victim, glad in one sense that his sufferings are over. At least he will never regain consciousness in this world that has used him so cruelly.

Our cicerones lead us on to the women's ward, after we have spoken with another young man of Bistritza, shot for pleasure, he tells us, by Bashibazouks as he worked on his field.

The first two patients we see are both from Biloshi, a little girl of ten, whose sweet face is still livid on one side from the blow of a rifle butt, and a woman whose eyes are terrible, and no wonder.

The little girl has eight knife wounds.

"Three in the head and neck, three in the breast, and two in the stomach," reads the doctor glibly.

"How did it happen?" we ask.

With trembling accents the child answers—

"At night they fired in the village, and we ran across the fields. Then they caught me and stabbed me."

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The woman says the same thing. She had her baby in her arms.

"They chopped it to pieces before my eyes," she wails.

A doctor supplements the story.

"All her left fingers were cut off; she was holding her baby at the time. She received five sabre cuts on the head, two of which fractured the skull. Further, a bullet through the right arm."

We shudder and pass on to the next bed, where lies a refined and tender-looking woman and her child, a sweet-faced little girl of perhaps four.

"These are from Krushevo," says our guide. "The child is shot through the foot, but the mother saved it, and fled to the mountains, where they have starved since then. Friends smuggled them in here two days ago. "Nervous prostration and starvation," he adds, replacing the board.

There is one more bad case which we are not spared. A perfectly ghastly-looking woman has fascinated us horribly since entering the room. She moans incessantly.

The doctor stands at her side and soothes her as he speaks.

"From Armensko. Sabre cut on left shoulder, cleft to the lung—we could see it working—and nearly severing the arm. One of the most terrible wounds we have treated, and a marvel she lives. Also a Mauser bullet through the other arm."

We feel sick and faint as we emerge once more on the corridor. We decline to see more, but one question we put ere we leave:

"Your patients are all Greeks or Wallachians?"

"Yes, all."

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"And what becomes of the Bulgarians? There must be hundreds of them."

"This hospital does not admit them," is the cold answer. "They go to the Turkish hospital—if they can get there."

Unhappy Bulgar peasant! Even in sickness and grievous misery thy co-religionists refuse thee succour.

We strove to get an equal insight into the Turkish civil hospital, but in vain. Something they showed us, it is true; two wards, one full of Turks—but no case really bad—another full of wounded Bulgar prisoners.

Iron bars surrounded the latter ward, a barred gate, guarded by an armed gendarme, gave access to the interior. Some show of reluctance was made ere this gate was opened, but the chief doctor came and took us in. All the men were sitting up in bed, some even were walking up and down. One patient specially attracted our notice, a man with a face terribly slashed and disfigured, now half healed.

Questions we ceased to ask, for they were ignored, or answered evasively, and as speedily as might be we were conducted to the apothecary, for no Turk can let a visitor go without a show of hospitality. It is thus that they seek to mask their lies and gain friends. It is ever impolitic to make needless enemies, and this the Turk understands and acts upon to the full.

Who knows but what we believe the charming chief surgeon when he declares that we have seen *everything*. Maybe we should have done, had not an assistant chemist, evidently a Christian or a Jew, whispered in our ear, "You should see the *other* wards."

We asked again on leaving, but ever polite came the

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THE COURT HOUSE.

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response, "Gentlemen, ye have seen *everything*," and for the third time we were invited to inspect the operating-room.

And now we are crossing a yard to a small building, where sits the special court of law to try Bulgarian prisoners suspected of participating in the insurrection. It is a court from which there is no appeal, and men are daily sent to exile, or death—it is the same thing often—or, and this is more seldom, set at liberty.

The house is built on the side of a little hill, entered from the lower side by the cellar, from which one climbs to the main floor, level with the road above.

Guards stand at the cellar door, where we are allowed to enter, to save a long détour. The interior is dark, so dark that at first we can distinguish nothing, for we are blinded by the glare outside. But we are suddenly conscious that it is packed with human beings, and hark, that is the mournful clank of chains. There is something that strikes to the very marrow in the sound of iron fetters on the limbs of men.

As our eyes grow accustomed to the gloom we pause involuntarily ere we mount the steep wooden ladder leading to the light above. The space around us is full of men, chained by clumsy iron bars, wrist to wrist. They are awaiting their trial. Ere the guards can hurry us up the ladder, a young man in European attire steps quickly forward, dragging his companion with him.

He is of refined appearance, neat even in this black hole, and suddenly begins to speak in faultless French.

"I am a teacher from Ochrida." He is talking very fast, for gendarmes are coming down the steps. "Four months ago my father, brother, and I were arrested, and have been in prison ever since."

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"What have ye done?" we query.

"God knows; we know nothing," he continued in the same rapid manner, though his voice trembled with excitement. "Our house and all our goods are confiscated. For the sake of humanity, do something for us. For the love of God, obtain our freedom."

He is pushed roughly back amongst his fellow-sufferers. One more glance—of pity—we give him, and his face is eager and hopeful. But what can we do for him?

Already impatient commands order us to proceed, and we mount the steps slowly. Long will that scene remain graven on our memories. The darkness, the squalor, and those manacled figures, so piteous, so silent, except for their courageous spokesman. Like dumb animals they gazed at us. Many were in European clothes, others in the tattered peasant costume, and one was a full-blooded Albanian; though how he came there we know not.

Ah! could ye in England but realize this misery, ye would not turn deaf ears to these cries for help, saying that this is exaggeration or talking politics. Ye were not always so cold and unbelieving; even twenty-five years ago ye were different; yet this is going on to-day, and will continue till help comes, for come it must ere long.

And what is written here is not the worst.

"God pity that man to-night when he gets back to prison," says our dragoman, a none too feeling man, and a Jew. "I would sooner be dead than be in his place."

We are in the light once more. Sentries stand on either side of the door leading into the court-room, and we would enter. Two rifles thrust across the door bar the way, but a word from a Turk gives us access.

It is a long room; the well is railed in, and filled with

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rows of benches ; a clear space leads round it to the tribunal at the farther end, where sit some sleepy Turks—the judges, the State prosecutor, and two or three clerks. Before them stands the interpreter, an evil-looking fellow, and at the farther end of the well nearest the judges sit three wretched objects in dirty sheepskins. They are Bulgarian peasants and the prisoners on trial. Absolutely motionless they sit with downcast heads, seemingly oblivious of their surroundings, for they understand not a word of Turkish, and in a monotonous voice the prosecutor is speaking. He talks slowly, and with frequent pauses, to enable the clerk to write down his words in full. There is another man who has just finished speaking, and he is the prisoners' defender. He also is indifferent, and lolls back in a chair beside the interpreter.

Meanwhile chairs have been brought us, and we sit and watch. Some witnesses are called, also peasants, who are quickly dismissed. They leave that dreaded court with alacrity. Who knows when they themselves will occupy the prisoners' bench ?

An officer lounges behind us, evidently in command of the guard, also indifferent, except for a languid interest in us. Every one is indifferent, judges, lawyers, guards, and prisoners. It is nothing but an empty formality to please Europe.

Flies are running unheeded over the heads of the prisoners ; they do not lift their manacled hands, but stare motionless on the floor before them. Then a question is put to them, and one rises slowly, and answers. Again he sits in the same impassive attitude.

The chairman nods, and the three rise once more and stumble stupidly out of the room, down to the cellar below.

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Other names are called. A judge yawns and stretches himself, and we go out into the generous sunshine once more, thanking God that we were born in another land.

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Uesküb's Dissipation

WE had dined wisely and well, an immense improvement on hotel fare, and my gratitude towards my host was heart-felt. With true Hungarian hospitality he had annexed me from the moment I had arrived in Uesküb, though my introduction was of the flimsiest. Together we had visited Pachas and Beys whom he knew from prolonged residence in that most memorable of towns, the capital of old Servia. With true Hungarian chauvinism he nobly seconded British independence, and together we had broken Turkish regulations and walked the streets at night without lanterns. The more we had been challenged the more we had been delighted, even joyfully standing at the muzzle of the challenging sentry's Mauser till the city police arrived and set us free, with much inward cursing.

"On no pretext whatever is a sentry"—so ran the orders of the Governor—"to fire on a European, neither is he to be arrested."

And we, knowing this, traded on our privilege to the full, to the helpless indignation of subordinate officials.

"Why should we of the West cringe to these dogs of the East?" said the Hungarian, sublimely ignoring the origin of his nation and the scarcely defined geographical position of Hungary, which is far more Oriental than Occidental.

But his enthusiasm was contagious, and I cheerfully aided and abetted him.

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The night before my departure for the South and pastures new, our evening meal had been unusually hilarious, thanks to the potent Magyar wine. Even the third in our midst, the hyper-nervous Bulgarian attaché, forgot for the time his fear of sudden death. A fourth had joined us over coffee, liqueurs, and cigarettes, a Turk of the Turks, but a pleasant fellow withal.

On the principle that spirits, however potent, are not wine, and consequently not forbidden by the Prophet, he cheerfully imbibed tot after tot of generous Benedictine with visible effect. Verily, it is time for the Prophet to return and reframe the law, since the invention of strange drinks. Even champagne has been declared but sugared water, which is true as far as the local production is concerned, but is libellous, though convenient, when applied to the genuine product.

"And now the evening is still young," queries the Hungarian, reclining lazily on the divan, "what dost thou say to a café chantant, O Effendi?"

"It would pass an hour, and the brandy is good," responds the Turk from the other corner, with somewhat humid eyes.

The little Bulgarian gasps.

"I dare not," he says. "It would be madness at such a time. Why, even to-night——"

"Cease croaking," cries the Hungarian. "It is for our visitor to decide. It will be a novelty, at any rate, for you."

Nothing loth, I agree, and a few minutes later we are on the moonlit street. Before us stalks the Bulgarian kavass with ponderous lantern, which sheds fitful gleams on the rough cobbles. To-night, with a Turk and a Bulgarian present, we must perforce observe the law which commands

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A STREET, UESKÜB.

KURDISH TROOPERS.

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every wayfarer after dark to illuminate the way with humble candle.

Like will-o'-the-wisps, lights dance across the fine old bridge and up the gloomy street before us. Turks pass or cross our path, and ever and anon a sentry with shouldered rifle peers suspiciously at us out of the darkness of a side alley. Patrols of ragged soldiery stalk by, ever with that keen glance of suspicion—for dynamite and massacre are in the air, and no God-fearing European walks the streets at night.

Our guiding lantern swings into the broad entrance of a rickety house where stands a policeman, noting carefully all those who pass in or out.

We emerge into a dimly lit, forlorn garden. At the back there are arbours—save the mark—under whose dust-laden branches sit a few groups of dissipated-looking Turks, or maybe Greeks. It is hard to tell the difference between a Turk who has lost his faith and a Greek who has never possessed one.

Occupying the centre of the garden is the strangest group of all. A dozen Albanian redifs are sitting round a large table, each with a rifle between or across his knees. Bandoliers of shining cartridges encircle their waists and bayonets peer suggestively from the folds of voluminous sashes.

They glance coldly at us as we seat ourselves not far from them at a primitive table with legs of various length.

The stage alone remains to be examined, and, my faith! it is worthy of inspection. An empty wooden box, bearing an inscription to the effect that once its contents were "superfine petroleum" serves as a step to better things above. It takes some negotiating, for it rocks and creaks ominously as a member of the orchestra returning to his

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instrument—an excruciating violin—puts it to its novel use.

There are four or five wretched individuals upon the stage, who constitute the orchestra, a couple of fiddles, an equally worn piano and drum and cymbals. On one side sit two forlorn-looking women, the gay Chansonettes of other and better lands. Above them all swing smoking and evil-smelling oil lamps, which painfully disclose the pervading misery of the place. An unusually heavy step brings down from the dilapidated wall a bit of plaster—what there is left—and the wooden framework behind grins forth like some uncanny skeleton. The jangling melody ceases and a "Chansonette" steps wearily forward, to sing some melancholy love song in Greek. She finishes, and with a plate descends to collect a few copper coins from the absolutely indifferent audience. We surprise her into a momentary flash of interest when we throw a few silver piastres into the sadly held plate. The Albanian redifs shift their rifles as they dive into capacious breeches pockets, and then she returns to her chair.

Every few minutes the policeman on guard outside looks in and walks slowly round the garden, and once an officer commanding a patrol enters and speaks with the redifs. They do not trouble to rise, but answer him in monosyllables, carelessly if not insolently. Then the officer glances at us and retires.

In due course the second Chansonette steps forward and wails in Serb, but with a watchful eye on us. She has heard of those silver piastres. We do not disappoint her, and her step is lighter than that of her predecessor.

It is very sad and mournful, and soon we retire. The Hungarian wishes me to visit another, which he declares is

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more lively—it could not be more deadly, as the Bulgar sagely remarks. The second place of giddy entertainment is near the Consulates, and the nearer we approach the more the sentries and patrols increase.

Wild gipsy music assails our ears, and through a throng of appreciative soldiery and gendarmes, congregated round the entrance, we find ourselves once more seated in an oil-lamp-illuminated room.

Three villainous Jewish gipsies, two men and a woman, are shouting a Turkish song in unison to the accompaniment of a zither, the true gipsy instrument. It is not without a certain wild beauty in its savagery and noise.

The audience is in harmony with the music, wild, savage, and noisy. There is but one redeeming feature, the face and figure of a young girl who is sitting in barbaric costume upon the stage. Ever and anon her eyes travel scornfully over the room, scanning the half-sleeping men and depraved officers. A glance at us plainly asks the reason of our presence, but it is only a glance, and she relapses into stony indifference.

Then she dances, and were it not for her expression, she might be taken for a modern Mignon; but, in spite of her undoubted beauty, the depths to which she has sunk are only too visible.

"Let us go," I say at length, and we emerge once more into the clean night air and to bed.

A little dissipation in Uesküb goes a long way.

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EN ROUTE.

KOPRIULI FROM THE RAILWAY.

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Florina

THIS was our plan. It had originated the night before in the brain of my American colleague, a young man of such youthful aspect that an aged Vali once asked how a child of his age could be entrusted with the important post of Special Correspondent. As the train curled and snorted up the slopes to Vodena we recapitulated our intentions. We were booked through to Monastir; in fact, as our passports were viséd for that town we could have done nothing else, but an hour's run before our destination was Florina, and near by a village called Armensko. Now at Armensko one of the most appalling massacres of the season had but recently occurred. Our idea was to alight casually at Florina and allow the train to go on without us, thus assuring ourselves of an uninterrupted sojourn of twenty-four hours. As for getting on to Armensko, we must trust to luck and chance. The idea was a good one and deserving of success, for it is only by surprising the Turks that the stranger within their gates can ever hope to see anything of their real doings.

The trip to Monastir is very beautiful. From Agustos nestling amongst vineyards, the railway commences to climb between vast walls of mountains, darting through tunnels or trembling across spidery viaducts. When once Vodena is passed, with its foaming waterfall rushing out of a steep cliff, and its ancient memories—Vodena is the classic

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Edessa and oldest residence of the Macedonian kings, several centuries before Christ—the scenery grows wilder and more severe. At Ostrovo we have reached the confines of the vilayet of Monastir and enter upon the happy hunting-grounds of the insurgents. The insurrection was in full swing at that time, and here and there the smoke of burning villages hung, a blue mist upon the green hills. The line skirts the banks of the limpid lake of Ostrovo, and we look longingly from our dusty carriage into those cool depths unruffled except by the leaps of great fish. On we go, still climbing past Sorović, where miles of tents and thousands of soldiers cover the greensward and throng round our train. They are Anatolians, Turkey's best troops, but what faces—cruel, lustful, and hideous. God have pity on the poor villagers who fall into their hands!

Past smiling little Ekshisu with its pretty church, sacked and desecrated a few weeks later, and then we reach the highest point on the line, Banitza, and descend into the fruitful plain of Pelagonia, where lies Monastir.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the train pulled up in Florina, merely a station on the wide plain. The town itself lies an hour's drive away, under the shadow of a chain of mountains. It is odd that with very few exceptions the railway builders of the Orient never considered it necessary to construct the stations close to the towns whose names they bear. A walk of an hour, and often two, must be done ere the townsman can reach the station.

We did not hurry to unload our traps, but ultimately we stood upon the crowded platform and ordered our things to be conveyed to a rickety carriage outside. So far we had apparently escaped notice in the bustle and confusion, and as we started on our drive the train was moving out of the

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station. So far so good; not even the police at the barriers had stopped us, and we even doubted whether they had seen us. With the promise of liberal backsheesh to stimulate him, our driver lashed up his horses, and we had covered some distance when we heard the galloping of hoofs and turned to see another carriage tearing after us, swaying alarmingly over the bad road. The driver was shouting and gesticulating, and as we slacked our speed we heard him ordering us to return to the station at the command of the police. We had neither given our names nor shown our passports—a most unheard-of proceeding—and we had better go back lest there should be trouble. We smiled politely and declined, in spite of our own driver's evident unwillingness to proceed.

A few weeks afterwards, in Monastir, I learnt that the police officer on duty that day at the station had been fined a month's pay for his carelessness; which may or may not have been true.

We jolted painfully and violently through the narrow streets of Florina, an object of the greatest curiosity, and pulled up at the house of the Greek Metropolitan, one of the most notorious men in the whole vilayet.

We were most affectionately received, for we bore a card of introduction from a Greek consul, and I must confess that the Bishop was a fine-looking old man. Aged, benevolent of aspect, with long snow-white beard, the true type of a patriarch. Yet that man has done more harm to the Christian cause in Macedonia than perhaps any other. No wonder he told us that the Bulgars had threatened to murder him, and in his house was quartered a strong guard of Turkish soldiers. For an hour or more he discoursed on the atrocities of the insurgents, and horrible they were. Luckily, the Greek Consul himself, who had given us the introduction,

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had warned us, saying that the hatred the venerable Bishop bore to the Exarchate Church caused him even to go hand in hand with the Turks. After that interview, during which he had repeatedly called God to witness the truth of his statements, Greeks came to us to beseech us not to believe all that he said.

"For," said they, "so great is his hatred for the Bulgars, whom we ourselves do not love, that he has given orders to his flock in mountain villages never to flee before the approach of Turkish soldiers, that they are their friends, and they should throw open their doors to them. And they have done so, and have been slaughtered and robbed. Armensko was also a Greek village."

And they took us to many Greek houses and showed us women dying from violation, wounded men, doors smashed in and furniture broken.

"These things the Bishop knows, yet never a word does he say to the Turkish authorities, seeking rather to accuse the Bulgars of these crimes."

In later days we proved many crimes against the venerable Bishop—how, accompanied by large escorts of Turkish troops, he had "converted" whole villages of Bulgars to the Greek Church, threatening massacre and pillage on refusal, protection and immunity on acceptance.

And the Bishop told us furthermore that his greatest friend had been Sir Alfred Billiotti, British Consul General for Macedonia, and Levantine Greek by birth.[1] No wonder British politicians have talked of the "balance of criminality." Before we left him we remarked innocently how certain British correspondents had advocated the cause of the brutal Bulgar insurgents.

[1] Compare the former Consul-General's reports with those of the present.

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IN FLORINA.

TURKISH VILLAGERS (BASHIBAZOUKS).

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"Those men," said the Bishop impressively, "have been bribed."

"Indeed," we responded with much innocence. "We did not know that funds were so ample. What does a British journalist cost?"

That evening we spent quietly in the humble hostelry, luckily spotlessly clean, though my impulsive colleague urged that we should drive to Armensko that night.

"It is our only chance. This evening the Turks are not on the lookout to stop us. To-morrow it will be impossible."

I am not a particularly nervous man, but I declined the risk of a nocturnal drive through an unknown country in the throes of revolution, infested by a murderous soldiery, with the final prospect of a night in a village burnt a few days ago with attendant horrors. As after events proved, we should never have reached Armensko except by a miracle.

Next morning the police were there, our passports demanded, and a man placed on guard at the door. Still, we ordered a carriage, and the driver blandly covenanted with us for the trip to Armensko. We departed in due course by devious alleys to permit the policeman to reach the Governor first. His official residence was situated at the end of the town, and here we were promptly held up by armed gendarmes.

"The Kaimakam wishes to have the honour of your presence," said one of them casually standing at the horses' heads.

We tried bluff, and ordered the driver to proceed; but that worthy politely stated his inability to do so, and so we went in with much ill grace. Inside the yard was also the prison. Dozens of wretched faces crowded the barred windows. A wretched old man, his face cut and slashed, and evidently

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bearing similar wounds on his emaciated body, was crawling across the yard to the pump. He was caught up and put out of sight in a moment. I met a man, one of the wealthiest Bulgars of the neighbourhood, in after days at Monastir. He had spent fourteen days in that prison, crowded with forty other men in a room big enough for half that number. They were never allowed to leave it except for an hour or so daily, and the horror and the stench he declared were terrible. He was an educated, well-dressed man, and to all intents a European by taste and experience.

The Kaimakam was a young man for a Turkish official. He was very polite, of course, and over coffee and cigarettes he remarked that he himself saw no objection whatever to our going to Armensko (Turkish officials never have any objection personally), but, alas! the matter did not rest with him. We must have permission from Hilmi Pacha, without which he must regretfully refuse. He suggested telegraphing for instance to our consul; but as this had to be done in Turkish, it seemed rather a doubtful proceeding. Nevertheless, we dictated a telegram, and it was duly transcribed in Turkish. Pending the arrival of the answer, we said we would stroll along the road outside the town. The Kaimakam looked doubtful at this proposition, whereupon we boldly said we were going unless he stopped us by force, which he dared not do.

"Now we will bally well walk there," said my American friend, when we were once more on the sun-scorched road. "It can't be more than two hours on foot."

And I agreeing, we started off at a five-miles-an-hour gait. We got clear of the town, and were going strong when we heard faint shouts behind us, and turning, saw an ancient police-officer panting in the distance.

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"He's sent to fetch us back," I remarked.

"Keep it up," retorted my companion. "We'll give him a show for his money."

But it was no good. Slowly but surely he overhauled us, by short runs, and we also noticed that a gendarme accompanied him. When he did catch us he was breathing heavily, and both men had doffed their fezes and were mopping their heads. It was an exceedingly hot day.

The road had been straight up to this point, but now a curve hid the immediate view from our eyes.

"You must stop here," panted the officer; and now that he had caught us we took pity on him and walked more leisurely. "It was only permitted to go for a short walk."

"Well, I guess it will be longer. We are going to Armensko," said the American coolly. "You daren't shoot us."

"No; but others will. Listen, round that bend is an Albanian regiment in camp. You must go right through them, and even my presence may not be enough to protect your lives. My own may be in danger."

"Oh, come, that won't do. Had we permission in writing we should have to go through them just the same."

The officer replied that were such the case we should have a score of zaptiehs with us, but should never be allowed to go unguarded.

We walked on to the bend, and there right enough was the camp of an Albanian regiment. We could see their little white felt skull caps quite plainly, and involuntarily we paused, to the intense relief of the officer. Both of us knew enough of the Albanians; and when a hundred or two of them, noticing us, collected on the road, we hastily reconsidered our plans.

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Had we possessed a good map, or known the country, we might have made a détour by the mountains, but afterwards we were glad that we had not tried. On our walk back we heard firing on the mountain ridge, and at the entrance of the town we met two men on stretchers, one dead and the other grievously wounded. They were Greeks, and both had been shot down whilst working in their fields. We asked the still living man who had done this, and he just breathed "Nizams." Later on in the day the Turks made him sign a paper, declaring that the perpetrators of the outrage were Bulgars.

Before we reached Florina a second gendarme met us. Our continued absence had caused alarm, and he bore an order to the officer to arrest us formally, which he did in a very sheepish manner, for we were both highly amused, and much annoyed him by continually taking photographs. Needless to say, we were immediately released on our return, but were asked in our own interests not to walk about the town. On the way to the inn we saw a soldier make a determined attempt to murder a wretched youth. Seizing an enormous block of wood he struck violently at the boy's head, missing it by a hair's-breadth. The expression on the soldier's face was terrible, and he became more infuriated at the failure. Taking the block in two hands he raised it over his head, whilst the boy shrieked and appeared paralyzed with fright. Then somewhat tardily some other soldiers stayed their comrade's arms, and our old officer hurried to the scene. The interruption was enough, and we were relieved to see the boy recover the power to move and run swiftly round the corner.

Thus ended our attempt to reach Armensko, which, I believe, no European except the Greek Consul ever visited

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after the massacre, one of the most horrible of the year.

We saw many of the wounded survivors in the Greek hospital in Monastir, and learnt the story again and again from their lips, also from the French Sisters of Mercy, who brought them in from Florina, whither they had been carried. For seven days these wounded had lain uncared for in a room in Florina, their hurts unwashed and festering; and the first bread that passed their lips was given by the pious Sisters. Many indeed died ere they could be brought to Monastir.

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THE GREAT MOSQUE, ADRIANOPLE.

THE GATEWAY OF THE GREAT MOSQUE.

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Bearding the Turk

WHEN I arrived in Adrianople one night about three o'clock, my intention was to stay a day or so in the ancient capital of the Turkish Empire, and then push on to Bulgaria; for I was weary of Turkey and the Turks, and this feeling was fervently reciprocated. My longing to breathe and move about once more without let or hindrance was great.

Next morning, however, I changed my mind, for the following reasons. I called on various consuls, and learnt from them that a drive to Kirk-Kilisse, an important and large town in the interior of the vilayet, was possible. The chief inducement, however, was that near the town lay the ruins of a recently burnt village, and, furthermore, the road ran right through another recently looted. Now, I had never seen such things in Turkey, though I had been sojourning for weeks in the midst of a country undergoing pacification, as understood by the Turks. The smoke of burning villages I had seen, and had spoken with hundreds of the miserable refugees who had crawled into the towns; but as for going a yard outside, that was out of the question.

Here was a chance to see what the Turks had hitherto only too successfully prevented my seeing, and I promptly told the consul under whose protection I stood that I was going. He looked grave and said—

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"Better call on the Vali first. If he refuses to give you permission, say you are going anyway. For you must have an escort."

"Not much," I answered. "He would only very politely shrug his shoulders, and tell me, of course, he could not stop me by force, and wish me a pleasant journey. The moment I left the room he would issue orders to every stable in the city, forbidding the loan of horses or a carriage to the accursed Englishman."

The Consul smiled, and remarked that I seemed to know the Turks.

"But there is the question of an escort," he went on. "The roads are very unsafe, and, besides, you will get stopped by the first official who finds your pass without a *visé* to leave this city. The odds are about ten to one against your reaching Kirk-Kilisse."

"I'll take them, Consul," I said, and he, seeing my mind made up, gave me the necessary information and introduction to the leading Christian inhabitants.

There was one thing in my favour. My identity was thinly veiled by the astuteness of a certain official, who for backsheesh misunderstood my name and profession, filling out the "Tescari" (inland passport) in the name of Lyon, and "advocat" instead of "correspondent." My real name and profession were much hated in Turkey; and I am firmly convinced, that in other towns where I was well known, the respective chiefs of police knew what I ate for breakfast every day.

Furthermore, my dragoman (interpreter) was clever, and attached to me. I will call him John, which is not his name, for obvious reasons. He had been with me for some time, and shared my dislike for the Turks from

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personal and violent experience. Poor fellow, he was one of those most unhappy mortals, a Macedonian Christian.

When I gave him his orders, which were to hire a carriage, giving particular heed to the driver, to provide food for the ten hours' drive, and, above all, to mention to no one our destination or plans, he pulled a very wry face. He then remarked that one thing comforted him, and that was that we should never get there.

It was still dark next morning when we climbed into a closed carriage, and as the first streaks of dawn shed a grey light over the monotonous plain we were outside the city, and bowling along at a good pace. The driver was a heavy-jowled swarthy Greek, who had been cautiously, but only partially, taken into our confidence.

"Of course there will be no difficulty in getting to Kirk-Kilisse if your passes are in order," he said; "but I wonder greatly that his Excellency the Vali sent no escort."

We responded truthfully that no doubt his Excellency would have done so had we insisted, but we preferred to give as little trouble as possible.

We reached the half-way village without adventure, and here we made a long halt, consuming our provisions with a hearty appetite. A lot of soldiers came in to look at us whilst sitting in the miserable inn, and one was good enough to wish us a pleasant journey. The tax-gatherer also entered into conversation with us, and seemed immensely proud of the fact that he was a Jew. He was a fine stalwart fellow, and utterly unlike his race. After food, he bore us off elsewhere to coffee and cigarettes, telling us meanwhile of a great journey he had once made in Eastern Roumelia, a few hours distant from this spot.

Our adventure began in Jenidze, a large village, and

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the last before reaching Kirk-Kilisse. A few weeks previously it had been looted by an Albanian regiment. Here we made another halt, and leaving the carriage outside a han full of soldiers, we started off on foot as nonchalantly as possible, with a camera, on a tour of inspection. A few houses were occupied by miserable-looking women; there were no men about except soldiers, but the majority of houses were empty, with smashed windows and doors. As for the interiors, they were swept bare of every article, and any exceptionally cumbersome piece of furniture had been wantonly hacked to pieces with axes. It was a pitiable sight. A young girl told us, after recovering her speech, which she had lost at being accosted by strangers, where the priest lived. He was not at home, but his womenfolk took us into the house, which had not been looted (the only one as it happened), and bade us wait a few minutes. In a room on the upper floor lay a man evidently grievously hurt, but he would not tell us what had happened. He just groaned and closed his eyes, covering his body hastily with a trembling hand. The priest soon came, a venerable man, with long white beard and hair. He took us into another room—the presence of the sick man stretched on the floor not being exhilarating—and gave us coffee.

John soon made him talk, after duly impressing my nationality upon him, and he gave us the full story of the Albanian raid.

The looters were a regiment being sent back to their homes for particularly atrocious misdeeds during the quelling of the recent revolt. Not that this would have mattered, but the men were mutinous, and constituted a danger to the Turks themselves. When they came upon the village, they promptly broke ranks and spread like

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THE TURKISH SOLDIERS AT JENIDZÉ.

PRIEST'S HOUSE, JENIDZÉ.

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a cloud of locusts over the place, completely gutting it, and violating the women. Five unhappy victims were dying now, said the old priest. The church had been desecrated, and every article of value stolen, even to the chalice and the Mass vestments. Here the priest pointed to his ragged cassock.

"In this I have to celebrate. They even stole my new cassock, and this is all I have to wear. My assistant, a young priest, was struck on the head with a clubbed rifle and nearly killed."

"And the officers," we queried, "did they participate?"

"They stood outside in a group and waited till the men had finished. They——"

At this point a heavy tread was heard on the rickety stairs, and the ancient priest broke off, his face betraying a pitiful anxiety. He sprang tremblingly to his feet as two burly soldiers, with rifles, burst roughly into the tiny room.

"Our lieutenant orders your presence immediately. Follow us," said one in a gruff voice. (I purposely give the conversation direct. Of course it was translated by John at the time.)

John rose obediently, whilst the priest clasped and unclasped his thin hands, glancing fearfully at the rough soldiers.

Not being used to such peremptory commands, and much angered at the abjectness of my fellow-Christians, I remained seated.

A look of fury appeared on the face of one of the soldiers, a bearded man of savage aspect.

"Follow us at once," he shouted; but anger is sometimes contagious, and in my loudest voice I replied that the

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officer could come to me. I also remarked that an Englishman was not at the beck and call of every petty Turkish officer. The man had hardly grasped my meaning, when he presented his rifle in a fit of ungovernable rage. What would have happened in another second I know not if the second soldier—evidently of more intelligence, and realizing that I was not the ordinary kind of Christian dog to be shot or beaten without a murmur—had not struck up the threatening rifle. John likewise sat upon me, for I felt much like going for the beggar, rifle or no rifle.

Then the second soldier spoke in a different tone. Those were his orders, he said, and as soldiers they had to carry them out. If we refused, what were they to do? They would only be punished.

There was logic in this, and reluctantly, and with as many insulting and high-flown remarks as I could think of on the spur of the moment, all faithfully and gleefully translated by John, who was getting some of his own back, I rose.

In the yard below there were many women congregated, evidently greatly alarmed, though surprise soon overcame them at seeing my truculent bearing—I was boiling with rage—and indifferent air. Once clear of the house, I quickly arranged my camera, and bidding my guard halt, which they did instinctively, I snapped them.

"Now, my friends, do you know what I have done?" I asked.

They said they thought I had photographed them, and both looked pleased at the compliment.

"Quite right," I replied, "and that picture is going to Constantinople to the Sultan, that he may learn how Englishmen are treated by such scoundrels as you."

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When they had done grovelling, I inquired if they thought I was going to walk through the village with them, that the people might think I was a common prisoner. At this they promptly made off, while we leisurely returned to the inn. Here we found the officer impatiently awaiting us, sitting cross-legged before the everlasting cup of coffee.

"Your passports," he thundered, without getting up; but John was primed. He knew what to say, and said it whilst I walked a little distance away and stood rudely with my back towards him, ordering the driver to put the horses to. It was a game of bluff, for I knew if I showed my passport, he would either send us back, or keep us here for further instructions. Meanwhile John expressed my views on the "outrage," hinted that I might be some unpleasantly high personage, and that I was going to make it hot for somebody. Then the two soldiers came back and told their tale of the Englishman's rage, who was not afraid of a pointed rifle. A minute later and the officer was on his feet respectfully begging my pardon. His explanation was a perfectly good one, and he was acting fully within his rights, but I did not unbend.

I said "Good," and got into the carriage, giving the signal to start. When we were fairly off to Kirk-Kilisse I congratulated John, who was sweating profusely.

Beyond a refractory horse, and the driver losing his temper and slashing both horses violently, whereby the steeds bolted over a field, missing a deep hole by the eighth of an inch, we had no excitement, till a police officer stopped us on the outskirts of Kirk-Kilisse. He demanded our passports. I refused, telling him to fetch them from the inn. He seemed surprised, but let us go.

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Our arrival caused great excitement in the streets. The town is off the beaten track for tourists, and for months had been in a state of semi-siege. It was but a few weeks ago that the insurrection broke out with great violence, and since then the Turkish troops had ravaged the land all round the town. Hence strangers were exceedingly rare.

Scarcely had I installed myself in the fairly decent hotel, and had arranged two or three chairs in the form of a lounge on the balcony, when a police officer arrived. He demanded my presence at the chief of police and my passport.

The latter I gave him, and sent John to represent me.

In ten minutes John and another officer returned with a request that I should come immediately. John was quite excited, recapitulating with great fervour the chief's amazement at our arrival without the necessary permission.

"My worthy John," I replied, "you knew he would be excited. Kindly explain to your uniformed friend that I am tired, but if his chief wants to see me, I shall be only too glad to see him here."

The officer gasped. It was unheard of.

"But your passports are not viséd; you ought not to be here at all," he expostulated.

"But we *are* here," I replied calmly. I was enjoying myself now. "And as for the passports, is this not part of the vilayet of Adrianople?"

The officer admitted the fact.

"Well," I said, lighting another cigarette, "your worthy chief will see that the passports are duly viséd for 'Adrianople.'"

"Yes, we have seen that, but that means the *city* of Adrianople, not the whole vliayet."

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ADRIANOPLE.

KIRKKILISSE.

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"It is good enough for us," I replied. "Tell him, John, to cease from worrying me."

The officer stood gazing in blank astonishment and then went away.

Another and higher official returned to the attack ere I had finished a most refreshing bottle of beer. Much of the above conversation was repeated, I blandly ignoring the fact that Kirk-Kilisse was not Adrianople, and expressing great sorrow at my ignorance of the necessary formalities in travelling. He begged me to come, for a few moments only, to his chief, but I pointed to my outstretched nether limbs, and complained of fatigue. He, too, gave it up with a gesture of helplessness, and a third and still higher official took up the game. He was invested with power to compromise.

Would I write, and sign a paper, declaring my intentions in coming here, and, furthermore, come to the chief of police in the morning, when my fatigue was overcome?

So I penned a few lines, stating that I was an eccentric Englishman travelling for my pleasure, affixed an illegible signature, and left the question of to-morrow's visit an open one.

Then I went to the French Consular Agent and had dinner, gleaning much interesting information.

Next morning I visited many Greeks, to whom I had introductions. About an hour's walk from the town was once a village named Raklitza. A short while ago it had been burnt, and I wanted to see it.

My new friends shook their heads.

"You are being closely watched, and the Turks will never let you leave the town," they said. "Besides, a

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fort overlooks the destroyed village. It is full of soldiers, and the paths are infested with them, all bent on murder and plunder."

"These things we know," we replied, "but how to get there?"

And then we concocted a plan, for they were only too willing that I should see these horrors. A man was found to act as a guide. He was to precede us at a distance of a couple of hundred yards. We must watch him carefully, for under no consideration dare he turn round or show any consciousness of our proximity. Also we must walk quickly, get there and take our photos, for half an hour after our departure an alarm would be given to the Governor, who would send police after us and rescue us if we fell by any chance into the hands of the Turkish soldiers.

Half an hour later, a man passed us without a glance of recognition. He was our guide, and at a discreet distance we followed, keeping his fez just in sight. I shan't forget that walk for some time, and I am certain poor John won't. Nothing happened, it is true, but we were excited, because to an imaginative mind the way was fraught with dangerous possibilities.

I tried to keep up John's spirits by telling him that I would not desert him, but he knew the inside of a Turkish prison from bitter experience.

"I'll get you out in a few hours," I said cheerfully, as we plodded on through the scorching sun, across vast vineyards, the luscious grapes rotting on the stems. "They'll hardly dare run me in too."

But John would not be comforted.

"I have known men killed within five minutes of passing

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the prison gates," he answered. "The first thing they do on getting a new prisoner is to beat him with clubbed rifles, and they never look where they are hitting."

We passed distressingly close to the fort, for we could see the figures of the sentries plainly silhouetted against the sky as they paced to and fro on the top of the earthworks.

In about an hour from starting we came in sight of the village, lying in a small depression, and partially surrounded by trees. Some of the outer walls were standing, and at a distance it presented a picture of rural peace. A few hundred yards away frowned the earthworks of the fort. Our guide vanished from our gaze, and we did not see him again till we were ready to start on the return journey.

Inside the village a very different picture was before our eyes: charred heaps of stones, bricks and timber lay scattered around; few walls were standing; still fewer houses remained whole; and the only living things in view were a few starving dogs, that whined pitifully for food. Not a stick had been left in some of the partially standing huts, and near by could be seen the half burnt skeletons of horses and cattle.

There, in the brilliant sunshine, lay the handiwork of the Turk, desolate and infinitely sad, one only of many hundred examples.

Just as we were preparing to go, an old man and woman emerged from one of the remaining houses, the windows of which we had noticed to be closely barred and boarded up. Very slowly the man, leaning heavily on the arm of his equally aged wife, tottered towards us, and at our feet he sank in a helpless heap.

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I will not harrow my readers with his account of the horrors of that night when the Turks suddenly descended on the village; it is enough to say that with tears streaming down his furrowed face he told how only the day before soldiers had come again and robbed him of the little they had left him.

"And oh, sir, do not let them beat me again," he sobbed, baring his miserable body. "We have now *nothing* left, but do not let them beat me."

We drew back, I am afraid with many curses on the Turk, as we saw the ghastly bruises on his skeleton frame.

"Rifle butts?" asked John huskily, for the tears were running down his cheeks.

The old man moaned an acquiescence as he covered up those horrors.

A cough, apparently from our immediate neighbourhood, startled us into a remembrance of where we were, and John hastily packed up my camera, nodding towards the fort. A score of soldiers were moving quickly about on the ramparts, evidently watching us. As we walked briskly away from the village, keeping well under cover wherever possible, we noticed them marching towards us. Luckily, they made for the village, and, as it transpired, after searching for us, they followed us by another path. At any rate, we reached Kirk-Kilisse without meeting a soul, to the intense relief and astonishment of our Greek friends.

No alarm had been given to the Governor, because our departure was noticed almost immediately by those sent to watch us. They had at once guessed our destination, but, like the soldiers, chose the wrong path to follow (there were three paths leading to Raklitza it seems), and were

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RAKLITZA.

SOLE SURVIVORS OF A MASSACRE.

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at their wits' end to keep the news of our successful trip from the knowledge of the authorities.

That afternoon we calmly called on the Governor to ask for the necessary permission to travel farther into the vilayet.

He was a most courteous gentleman, and the fact that he walked into the room accosting me by my right name proved that the telegraph had been busily at work. Of course further travel was out of the question, and the old gentleman laid great stress on his request that we should attempt to go nowhere. He little knew of our morning's walk! He was also visibly delighted to hear that possibly we might return to Adrianople on the morrow. After the usual coffee, we took an affectionate farewell, but, on leaving the Konak, I noticed a heap of old guns and matchlocks in the hall, which gendarmes were sorting and numbering under the guidance of an officer. I recognized in this varied selection of antiquities "rifles captured from insurgents," as they invariably figure in Turkish reports, and the possession of one of these curiosities is ground enough to burn a village. But I innocently approached the officer, asking, through the medium of John, if any were for sale.

"Why?" asked the officer, eyeing me suspiciously.

"Because I am a collector of old weapons," I replied with my blandest air.

With a grunt of suppressed rage the officer turned away.

If I had harboured any hopes of penetrating farther into this forsaken land I was rudely disillusioned that evening, as towards sundown we strolled to the higher part of the town. A numerous guard was stationed at the end of the town, and we politely asked the sentry if we might

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ascend a little elevation just beyond, in order to obtain a view of the town and surrounding country. A hodja or priest, responded for him, and said, "Of course."

I returned to the guard-house and stood a few minutes watching a detachment of soldiers march by in the customary disorder of the Turkish army, and then turned on my heel to retrace my steps into the town.

"Dur!" was promptly thundered at me by the sentry, which, being interpreted, signifies "halt!" It is a word I had learnt by many previous experiences with Turkish sentries.

"What's that for?" I asked John, who, like me, had stopped dead on that ominous command.

John inquired, receiving a contemptuous glance from the soldier as answer.

"Oh, you be—lots of things," I remarked, and walked on.

"Dur!" and simultaneously I heard the rifle come down to "the ready."

"For God's sake, stand still," implored John, and I turned round to look down the muzzle of a Mauser.

We gazed at each other for some minutes, thinking thoughts, at least I was, and at last they got too many for me.

"John," I said, "ask that bounder with the rifle if he thinks I am going to stand here all night, and by whose orders he is holding me up."

The officer of the guard had said so.

"Well, tell the sentry to go to the officer for further orders, otherwise I'll walk away," I said. "Also you might add that two sentries were hanged recently in Monastir for shooting a consul."

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The sentry eyed John up and down in a manner for which I could cheerfully have knocked him down, and then walked into the guard-room. Almost simultaneously the policeman told off to dog us arrived, greatly perturbed. A minute later the sentry reappeared and said, "Git." This laconic remark is not slang, by the way, it means in Arabic "Go."

Taking the lapel of my coat between my finger and thumb I made the Turkish gesture significant of the greatest contempt, and walked home. I admit that it was a foolish thing to do, but I was intensely angry.

Then I sent John to the Governor with the story and many threats, whereupon in due time his adjutant called on me to offer his master's apologies, and to inform me that the officer and sentry had been arrested. But I had transgressed the law, insomuch as I had actually stood still and watched a body of Turkish troops march by, an action forbidden to all Christians in this district. Of course I was not aware of this order, remarked the adjutant sweetly, and it did not apply to such infidels as I.

The evening I spent quietly in the hotel. Here an old gentleman accosted me.

"Sir," he said, "I do not know who you are, neither do I wish to, but it may interest you to know that I am a Greek, a well-to-do farmer, living a few hours distant from here. For ten days I have waited to return to my home, but dare not for fear of the soldiers, hundreds of whom have left their regiments, and waylay travellers, Turk, Greek or Bulgar, to murder and rob them. I can obtain neither an escort nor permission to travel, I may be here for weeks. Pardon the liberty I take in addressing you. Good night."

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Next morning I returned to Adrianople, stopping only in Jenidze to visit the church, after sarcastically asking permission to do so from the officer in command. I do not wish to be arrested *again*, I remarked. He was very profuse in his reiterated apologies (poor man, he was soon afterwards cashiered for not having done his duty), and we went to church. Mass was being celebrated by a priest in ancient cassock, and with his head bound up in a cloth, but the old priest saw us immediately, and leaving his stall, showed us round the church. Everything of value had been taken, ornaments wrenched off, and the holy effigies mutilated.

At five p.m. we reached Adrianople once more, and found, of course, all the Turkish offices closed for the day. Now to leave the city in the early morning certain formalities had to be undergone, viz. the *visé* for our passports must be obtained, without which we should be stopped at the station. For myself I had but little fear, but in John's case this was very different, and I had no intention of leaving him behind to the tender mercies of the Turks.

So I dispatched John straight to the Vali with a message to the effect that I wished to leave in the early morning but would not do so without him. John tells that story very well, and with a keen appreciation of its humour.

The Vali had retired for the day, but on hearing whose servant John was, immediately received him, expressing great relief at our return from Kirk-Kilisse. He furthermore sat down and wrote out an order that both our passports were to be viséd that evening at any cost. He also sent our servants to hunt up the necessary officials.

Needless to say, next day we shook the dust from off our feet on the Bulgarian frontier.

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A CAB, ADRIANOPLE.

A STREET, ADRIANOPLE.

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The Insurgents

I

TO anybody living in Turkey during an insurrection the insurgents speedily assume the character of a semi-spectral host. One very rarely, if ever, sees the real insurgent, the man clad in brown homespun and wearing the "Death or Freedom" cap. Sometimes a prisoner is brought into a town, but I confess that I never set eyes upon the real article till some months later in Sofia. Yet they were ever present. To-day they had fought a battle with the Turks two hours west of Monastir; yesterday, it was two hours eastward: their reports and messages reached their destination with clockwork regularity. It was almost as easy to send a letter to an insurgent leader in the neighbourhood as to London, in spite of thousands of encircling troops.

In short, they were ubiquitous and walked round the Turks at will, yet one never set eyes on them. We did see scores of so-called insurgents. Any evening we could watch a batch of them pushed out of the train from Salonica, miserable starving wretches, heavily chained, where flight was an utter impossibility: but these were local peasants, nothing else: perhaps forced participants through hunger or despair, but not the real thing, not the men who came from Bulgaria, well armed, clothed, and fed.

The reason of this is that no sworn member of a band

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ever lets himself be taken prisoner. They fight to a finish when surrounded, and at a pinch they have their poison.

At Monastir I had ample opportunity of studying their magnificent organization, the result of long preparation. It soon becomes apparent that the present rising is not the work of a few months, but of many years, and one that is ultimately bound to succeed, as it succeeded in other lands once under the unenviable sway of the Turk. It is a combination of brain, showing study of every eventuality and possibility, and when necessary, of reckless courage and self-sacrifice. That their methods are not always commendable, even their best friend must admit; but it is no time for kidglove warfare when men stake their lives on the issue, where such a goal is in view, and in a fight against such heavy odds.

Think of it! Five thousand men defying three hundred thousand. These were roughly the odds last summer, and yet who undoubtedly had the best of it?

There were the regrettable dynamite outrages at Salonica, where innocent persons lost their lives, a very few though; likewise at Kuleli-Burgas, where a train containing Europeans was blown up: but I believe these are the chief points against them. Furthermore, I do not think they will be repeated. As it was, they were the work of the reckless few, not of the intelligent majority. Still, all lovers of fearlessness should pause ere they condemn, for instance, the Salonica outrage.

Half a dozen men entered that town deliberately and threw bombs at an appointed hour, knowing death, and a cruel one, was certain. It takes nerve to do that. And then, no one spoke of the Turkish atrocities which ensued as a consequence. Scores of absolutely innocent persons

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were ruthlessly massacred, and well I remember how a Bulgar, subsequently in my service, told of those awful days. He himself, though registered as a "Greek," never left his house for weeks. Once he saw a boy going to a well in the square before his house, who, whilst stooping to fill the pail, was pierced through the skull by a bayonet wielded by a passing soldier. "The onlookers wept at this, for he was a good boy and well-beloved," as he said in his simple language. Further, he said that hundreds were arrested "on suspicion," and thrust into the now notorious "White Tower." These men were once examined by the Vali in his house, and subsequently sent back to jail. To get there they had to pass through a narrow doorway where stood four men with bludgeons. These miscreants wantonly struck at each pair that passed "anywhere, on the head, arms, body, or legs—there was no escape. The bruises were awful, and some died—those that were struck on the head."

This was related to me by one of the victims "subsequently released by the clemency of the Sultan." Others told me of the heartrending wails of these men as they ran this terrible gauntlet.

Another case I learnt from an American who saw a man killed in the street in broad daylight, slain outright; but five soldiers who did the deed thrust their bayonets again and again into the prostrate body, mutilating it beyond recognition.

Of these things we heard nothing, but I crave pardon for the digression.

Apart from these so-called outrages, there was not a single case of wanton cruelty—of the slaying of women and children, of the destruction of whole villages—on the part of

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the insurgents. I strove in vain to prove such accusations, so often made by the Turks and by "friendly" correspondents. Consuls could obtain no corroboration, neither could the missionaries or men actually in the know and unbiassed.

Houses were burnt, men were murdered, but in every case it was a justifiable revenge for betrayal. I say justifiable, because when every man's hand is against the insurgents, terrorism must be resorted to. Those men who were murdered—chiefly Greeks, who play such a despicable part in the Macedonian fight for freedom—were always given a rude trial; they were found guilty of gratuitously betraying the hiding-place of a band or of giving other information to the Turks, and they knew their fate if tracked and caught. Even Bulgars have been murdered for faithlessness; there is no national prejudice displayed, and traitors to "the Holy Cause" are dealt with summarily!

Even if the aforesaid atrocities had been committed, is there not—let us be honest—every excuse for it?

We have seen our wives and daughters violated with nameless horrors by brutal soldiery, our house burnt to the ground, and ourselves utterly beggared in honour and worldly possession in an hour. We escape miraculously, perhaps grievously wounded, and fly to the mountains, now our only home. A band is there who gives us food, and, what is even better, a rifle and cartridges. One day Turks fall into our hands—what would *we* do then?

And yet these men, whose civilization, from centuries of oppression, is at a far lower ebb than ours, restrain themselves from such merciless acts of retaliation.

I have spoken with many of the insurrectionary agents, notably in Monastir, and often listened to such noble senti-

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A LOOTED VILLAGE.

A LOOTED VILLAGE.

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ments of patriotism—no mere display of words in a position of this kind—that I have been staggered.

When first received into the confidence of the insurgents, after weeks of endeavour on my part, for I wished to hear both sides, I met a young Bulgarian. For his sake I dare not say how or where, for when these lines are printed they might easily lead to his arrest.

I had been weighed and not found wanting—all unknown to myself—and I was straightway admitted into their confidence.

"How, my friend," I asked him once, "do you know that I can be trusted? I go daily to the house of Hilmi Pacha and of Nazir. A word from me and you would be lost, and perhaps the secret local organization discovered."

He smiled and answered—

"We have watched you day and night, and we know our friends. Besides," he added, "you can betray *me* if you wish. The risk is ever before me. Even now I may be watched, and then my fate is sealed. Exile and death on the way, but *that* is of no importance. There are others here, and when they are gone, still more. Many must still lose their lives before our cause is won. But by my capture there will be no secrets revealed."

This man had already tasted the horrors of a Turkish prison, and another with whom I often spoke had undergone torture. He was still a physical wreck, but as fearless as ever.

From him it was that I learnt of the prison treatment of proven, or even suspected rebels.

He was incarcerated in a kind of small cellar, in fact, "the Little Ease" of our bygone days, where a man can neither sit nor stand nor stretch himself. It was underground and very damp.. At night soldiers pour water on the wretched

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inmate from above, often in a continuous stream, so that even sleep is prohibited. This treatment lasts sometimes three days, though, owing to some reason or other, my informant suffered less. Besides enduring the water torment, the inmate is prodded with bayonets or rifle butts, and the only opening is closed periodically till he is all but stifled.

"Many die here," said he, "and no wonder. See what I am now, and that was months ago."

The other prisoners fare little better. They are bound and beaten till they give the required answers, and at night continually awakened to prevent their obtaining complete rest.

I have told of other prison tortures elsewhere; but before I leave this subject, let me quote a letter which I saw and read in Adrianople, at the other end of Turkey.

It was written on a dirty scrap of paper, folded to a minute size, and had been smuggled out of the prison in a plate of food remnants. As the prisoners are fed from outside, this is sometimes possible, with the help of a confederate.

The writer was an insurgent caught red-handed, and the letter was dated sixteenth of September, old style—twenty-ninth of September, new style. It ran—

"The military tribunal has been abolished and a new one has taken its place. It passes sentences in secret, and there are no witnesses. So far, it has sentenced thirty-six men, sixteen to fifteen years' exile, the remaining twenty to death or ten years' hard labour. No good can be expected of a thoroughly fanatical tribunal whose motto is: 'It is a good work to oppress the unbeliever.'

"After sentence the prisoners are shut up in dark, windowless cells, into which they are packed like sardines.

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From these holes they are taken once in twenty-four hours for ten minutes in the fresh air. Many are already prostrated from torture previously undergone, and from the filth and misery; yet they are left without medical assistance. The writer of these lines was ill and taken before the doctor, Socrot Effendi.

"'What is thy nationality?'

"'Bulgarian.'

"'Poison, poison for thee, the Sultan's enemy! Get out!' Such was the medical help I obtained.

"It is a pitiful sight! If you could see the poor skeletons of peasants, starving, naked, sitting the whole day with eyes fixed and heads bowed on their breasts. How quietly are their lives passing away! The long weary day is endured only to be succeeded by the doubly awful night. It is worse than the Turkish torture! Oh, God! Why dost Thou not look down upon the *rayah*, to see to what conditions he has been reduced?[1] But let them torture us! Brutal Turkey may kill us, but the oppressed slave will not be annihilated by the slaughter of a few hundreds.

"We are soon to be deported to a distant land, such as St. Jean d'Acre, Podroum, and Diabekir, all living tombs. But we do not fear; from the day we consecrated our lives to the holy cause, from the day on which we kissed the holy revolver and the twice holy dagger, we have ever been ready to die for it."

Then followed the names of the thirty-six condemned men with details.

(N.B.—This is a literal translation of the original made on the spot, and worthy of comparison with similar accounts gleaned by the author in Macedonia.)

[1] *Rayah* is in Turkish synonymous for Christian peasant and sheep

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These instances should show that patriotism is not mere talk when such a fate are ever before combatants and non-combatants alike.

When I first came into touch with the insurgents in Monastir, I was placed on their list and received reports of the campaign regularly, as did the consuls. Those documents, which were often delivered daily, contained a dry account of any fights, or of the destruction of a village, with the names, ages, and particulars of those massacred there. There was no language wasted, no appeals to justice or flowery speech, but simply the bare account. Naturally, at first I was inclined to doubt the veracity of these reports, thinking them biassed, as the Turkish invariably were, but little by little I found that they usually under-stated the case, and this I pointed out to a consul, who at once admitted the fact. We often discovered on investigation that more houses had been burnt, or more Turkish soldiers killed, as the case might be, than was stated in the insurgents' report; and when I commended the secret agent on this wise moderation, he replied that they fully realized the harm they would do their own cause were they to exaggerate.

"You would never believe one of our reports again," he said.

We used to receive these reports in the oddest manner, for Turkey abounds with spies; a boy would suddenly appear, thrust a paper in my hand and disappear. I have had them delivered in my bedroom, on the street, or at the house of a friend. They were equally clever in delivering threats or messages to the Turks. Even the Sultan has received one of their messages, much to his perturbation, and I remember Hilmi Pacha receiving a letter from Boris Sarafoff in the following manner.

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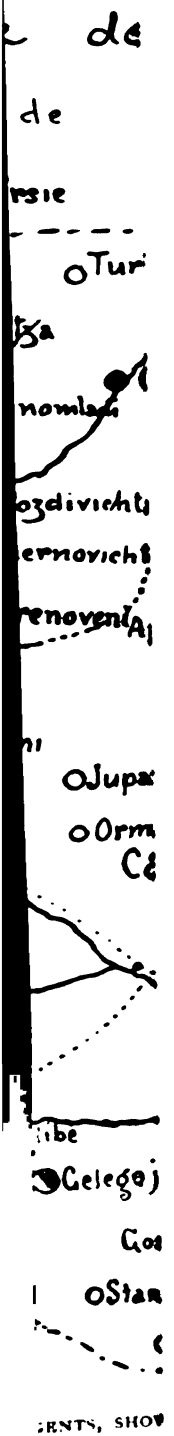

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A man from the hills came in one day and went to Hilmi's house, which is always thoroughly guarded. He told the sentries that he had a letter for the Pacha and would wait for an answer. The letter was taken up, and lo! when an officer came down to arrest the bearer—for the letter contained a threat—he had vanished as he had come.

When I expressed a wish to visit the insurgents in the mountains I was told that the various leaders must be first consulted, to ascertain if it would be absolutely safe for me to do so.

"We can get you through the lines easily enough," said the local agent, "and with safety too, but we shall not do so unless the leaders can guarantee your life in the mountains. We will take no risks here."

When I remonstrated, saying that I was prepared to take the risk on my own responsibility and that I fully recognized that a trip of this kind could not be undertaken without it, the agent answered—

"Yes; but how about *our* cause? If you are killed, Europe will say that we have murdered you."

This was just at the time that Hilmi Pacha officially informed the British Consul that the insurgents had threatened to murder either a British consul, correspondent, or an American missionary—one of the most thinly-veiled *Turkish* threats ever made, as I pointed out at the time.

The insurgents themselves were most indignant at the threat, for, as they put it, why should they kill the only people helping them, and do their cause immeasurable harm in Europe?

In due course I was informed that at the present juncture no guarantee for my safety could be given. I have quoted this incident to show the ease with which the insurgents

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could communicate with each other. It was a fact that every move of the Turkish troops was promptly reported to the bands in the mountains, who were thus never caught napping, except when betrayed.

There are hosts of amusing anecdotes illustrating the stupidity and incapability of the Turks on one side, and the cleverness of the bands on the other. The story of Smilevo I have told in my chapter on the Turkish army. I met a young insurgent who was second in command of the most advanced outpost, who had fearlessly come into Monastir some time after the final, and only battle, and had actually overheard the Turkish commanders arguing as to who should commence firing. He was still immensely amused at the incident.

Another case occurred soon afterwards in the mountains of Platche, when Bakhtiar Pacha, the "hero" of Krushevo, organized a great drive across the mountains to Steniahan. He knew that there was a large band hidden in the hills, which he swept with a large force. Hardly had he arrived at Stenia, having drawn a blank, when he was attacked *from the rear* and lost severely.

Of such incidents there were many, and they are easily explainable. The Turkish troops are no mountaineers, in fact, they hate climbing, and when they have to cross a mountain they stick to the paths religiously, invariably with the above results.

Time and again bands have been cornered, and fighting goes on sometimes for two or three consecutive days, until one morning the band has disappeared into the thin air of the mountains.

"He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day," is an axiom fully appreciated by the insurgents, in fact, it is

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A LOOTED VILLAGE.

A BAND OF INSURGENTS.

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one of their laws. I once had a copy of these instructions—unluckily I did not make a note of the contents, though it is now in the hands of the Foreign Office: but some of the items I will quote as well as I can from memory. They were addressed from headquarters to the leaders of the different bands operating in the vilayet of Monastir.

"In marching, which must be in single file, only the leading and rear men must carry loaded rifles.

"A numerically superior force must never be attacked, nor an inferior force if reinforcements are in the vicinity, unless victory is certain.

"Stragglers or small bodies should be always cut off and disarmed if they refuse fight.

"Rifle practice must be carried out whenever possible.

"Special care must be taken in the placing of outposts at night or when a halt is made." Neglect of this, it was pointed out, had led to more than one reverse of late.

"There must never be any reckless expenditure of ammunition."

These are a few of the items: the rest deal with all manner of contingencies, and are a signal proof of the marvellous organization of the committee.

To obtain the confidence of these men is not always easy.

There came once to Monastir an English journalist, who was red-hot in favour of the insurrectionary movement, and who had visited all the leaders previously in Sofia. He had been told that letters of introduction to local leaders were dangerous—which is obvious—and quite unnecessary, but that one day some one would speak to him in Monastir, it might be on the street or in his hotel. He waited patiently, but no one ever spoke, and he confided in me just before his departure. I mentioned it to my friend at once, and asked why

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the journalist had been ignored so markedly, pointing out that this was a mistake.

"We have watched him, and are not convinced of his sincerity," was the answer.

"But," I argued, "he knows Tatartcheff and is an admirer of the movement. Besides, I can guarantee his good faith."

"He is an intimate friend of the Greek vice-consul, and lives in a Greek hotel, and we are nervous. But if you guarantee. . . ."

"He leaves to-morrow," I said.

"We know," was the somewhat equivocal answer.

II

The plan of last summer's campaign is worthy of a little study, though in its seeming vagueness it may appear to the unobservant as somewhat meaningless.

If we remember, the real insurrection broke out in the vilayet of Monastir, at the beginning of August. It took the Turks completely by surprise, and before they could turn round two or three important towns were in the hands of the insurgents. The local forces proved inadequate; several small garrisons were annihilated, and the result was that thousands of reinforcements were hastily poured into the vilayet; the reserves were mobilized; Anatolian troops hastily re-called, all at immense expense and trouble. Before the month was half over some sixty thousand troops were concentrated in Monastir, to fight two or three thousand insurgents. Towards the end of the month a few handfuls of insurgents made a *very* small demonstration in the vilayet of Kossovo, which caused the instant mobilization of about fifty battalions of redifs.

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Hearing of this overwhelming force, the European press united in predicting the extermination of the bands, and when skirmishes became less and less frequent it was declared that they had been destroyed.

Suddenly, just when affairs looked settled, the insurrection broke out afresh at the other end of European Turkey, and exactly four weeks after the Monastir outbreak the vilayet of Adrianople was ablaze.

Again Turkey found itself entirely unable to cope with the rising, and more redifs had to be mobilized, every available battalion in other parts of the country hastily dispatched, and more Anatolian regiments sent for.

Within two or three weeks Adrianople was full of troops, traffic had been dislocated, and another tremendous expenditure incurred.

Ere this second rising had been "quelled" lo, a third broke out in the Razlogkaza, right on the borders of Bulgaria, again exactly four weeks later and at the most distant available point. This time the Turks were even more hard put to it, for the band lay far away in the mountains, removed from a railway base and in the most difficult country of all.

Again regiments and batteries were dispatched, the railway was disorganized for days, and more money in hard cash expended.

This was just before the winter, and the final outbreak. With great cunning the insurgents chose this last locality, for they had their retreat assured them, and when they had enticed sufficient numbers of Turks into those mountain fastnesses and done as much damage as possible, they quietly retired across the border to comfortable winter quarters, leaving several thousand discontented and ill-clad soldiers to freeze for months in the snow.

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Furthermore, by judicious dynamiting they kept many regiments engaged in guarding the entire length of the railways, which they never blew up and never meant to. Add to this, an ever-threatening war-cloud—though again Bulgaria never intended fighting last year—and Turkey had more than her hands full.

The whole campaign was so exquisitely arranged and organized that it ran like clock-work. The Turks never knew what would happen next, thanks to the carefully-worked Sofia press, which continually predicted a rising on an enormous scale in some other part of Macedonia, never intended and of course never begun.

Now the point of it all is that these hundreds of thousands of troops have devastated the country. Where a rising broke out the Turks went through that land like a cloud of locusts, thanks to an utterly incompetent commissariat. They played into the hands of the insurgents, for they massacred the peasants and destroyed the crops and ate up the land. Not only were the crops destroyed, but the sowing was prevented, so that this year (1904) famine will rage over three parts of the country.

In the coming outbreak the most vital problem which stares Turkey in the face is the provisioning of the troops. With her lack of organization this will prove an almost insurmountable difficulty, and by this time her finances must be well nigh crippled. On the other hand, during the winter months the insurgents will have replenished their secret stores in the mountains, for they are well equipped, even with bake ovens, and will be fully prepared to carry on a guerilla war as before.

Last year they were invariably well fed and had plenty of ammunition, all of which had been collected months before

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and deposited in certain spots. It will be precisely the same this year, only with the odds considerably more in their favour.

Also I predict the wholesale blowing up of the railway; and, it may be mentioned here, that the destruction of a viaduct, say on the Monastir railway, will cause a delay of from four to six months ere it can be rebuilt. These are, however, matters for the future, and hardly belong to this chapter. I only wish to point out the iron discipline existing amongst these men, the strict adherence to plans and orders, and the rigid way in which they were carried out. How easy it would have been for a determined band to blow up one of these viaducts, or to have precipitated a rising before the appointed time! But no; doubtless the idea was to cripple Turkey financially as much as possible, by forcing her to mobilize every available man and to transport them frequently at great expense, whilst the bands were simultaneously devastating the different districts.

It may, I think, safely be said that seldom or never has an insurrection been more carefully planned, or, as far as we can judge, more successfully carried out.

It will be curious to see what part the Albanians will play in the coming renewal of hostilities. Last summer the clansmen of Dibriot swore to go into the mountains and exterminate every band, playing at their own game. Now, I believe the Albanians could do the insurgents a lot of harm, for they are likewise mountaineers, good shots, and of reputed courage. But—and it is an important "but"—they didn't do it, and when I mentioned this contingency afterwards to a noted leader of the insurgents, he declared they never would. I begged to differ, but he remained convinced.

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One thing however is certain, and that is that the Bulgars have lost their old dread of the Albanians as they have of the Turks, very much, I should suppose, as the Egyptians have ceased to fear the dervishes.

A striking instance of this occurred last September which very much opened the eyes of all who know the Bulgars. In the Kaza of Kastoria there was a famous band led by one Tchakaraloff, an ex-bandit chieftain, and perhaps the most savage of all the insurgent leaders in the field last year. The Turks had played havoc in that Kaza, and no less than twenty-three Bulgar villages were partially or entirely destroyed, with massacres in nearly every instance. This band, however, discovered that the Albanians of Kolonia, a district some distance away across the mountains, had assisted the Turkish troops on many occasions. Tchakaraloff immediately marched his band, only a few hundred strong, across the Pass into the midst of the Albanians, looted and burnt three villages, and carried off some fifty women as hostages for the return of a number of Bulgarian women who had been kidnapped. This most daring feat occurred whilst I was in Salonica, and the result was the sudden exit of nearly all the kavasses of the consulates who were from that district. However, be it stated, Tchakaraloff murdered no one in cold blood, as the Albanians themselves admitted.

The lesson learnt will not be without considerable after-effect.

When I arrived in Bulgaria and saw for the first time the insurgents in the flesh, I was more surprised than ever. A more workmanlike lot of men I have seldom seen—young, bearded, and bronzed. Their uniform is plain even to ugliness, but thoroughly serviceable. No buttons show, and the equipment is of the simplest. Some of the bands, it is

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DRIVING IN BULGARIA.

LAW AND DISORDER.

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true, are picturesquely attired in national costume, but I gather that these men have joined across the border and will doubtless be re-equipped before they cross again.

It was soon after I had arrived in Sofia that I heard of a band arrested and disarmed by the Bulgarian gendarmerie as they re-entered Bulgaria, and conducted under escort to the capital. Here they were set free and promenaded the town. Many of them wore Turkish trophies, and all were merry, hearty fellows, somewhat inclined to rowdyism at night, it is true, but that is excusable.

The next batch I saw was when on my way to Koestendil, a border town. I had travelled down by train as far as Radomir, and it chanced that the Minister of Justice was on board, in a royal saloon carriage. When he heard that I was on the train he had me introduced, and I travelled most luxuriously in the saloon, drinking coffee and smoking excellent cigarettes in truly Oriental fashion.

At Radomir we took carriages—it is very pleasant travelling in carriages in Bulgaria; four horses are yoked abreast and go at a tremendous pace—and about halfway to Koestendil we met a band of about forty men, disarmed and under escort of two gendarmes. They were resting at a wayside han.

The leader was an enormously fat man, celebrated as a national poet I was given to understand, but how he had managed to keep his corporation after two months' hard campaigning across the border passed my comprehension. Still, there he was, all joviality and health, an indisputable testimony of the insurgents' commissariat arrangements.

We were closely following the Minister's carriage, which stopped in the midst of the band, and his Excellency jumped out and handed the fat leader thirty francs in paper money.

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I was amused at the incident, which signified a great deal.

I also stopped for photographic purposes, though I had to wait some time till the delighted band and their guards emerged once more from the han, whither they had promptly disappeared, presumably to drink the Minister's health.

At first he of the corporation refused to be "snapped," but a little persuasion soon brought him up to the camera and to a state of communicativeness.

With his band, he told me, had been a woman, who bore the strain as well, or even better than any of the men. As I afterwards ascertained, this is by no means a rare occurrence, and many women are sworn in as insurgents, fighting shoulder to shoulder with their husbands or brothers. Photographs were shown me fully proving this; besides, I have the testimony of many European eye-witnesses.

My fellow travellers also owe a debt of deep gratitude to the insurgents; for when we were journeying across the Rilo mountains, a band undoubtedly saved our lives.

At the end of that terrible day (see "In the Rilo Mountains") we had a jolly evening in their midst, which reminded me of many similar experiences over log fires in the huts of the Montenegrins and Albanians.

I was unlucky in not meeting any of the great leaders in Bulgaria. General Tzontcheff, the greatest and most chivalrous of them all, was "across the border," though I met him afterwards in Vienna; Yankoff, Boris Sarafoff, and all the rest of them, likewise. They were busy tidying up for the winter, so to speak. I am, however, looking forward keenly to the spring, when I trust to see them at work.

Dr. Tatartcheff, their "business manager," I often talked with in Sofia, and a great improvement he is to the theatrical and bombastic Professor Michaelowski, who has at last

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"HE OF THE CORPORATION."

THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

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retired. He is a man of few words, but what he says is to the point. I owe him thanks for a letter of introduction to all good Macedonians, which secured me everywhere a warm reception.

Whoever has had to do with these men has liked and admired them, with one notable exception, for their honesty, cheeriness, and courage.

All through the winter they have been steadily working or the spring. Many of the hardiest bands are keeping the ball rolling and are slowly but systematically destroying the Turkish border blockhouses. This keeps a large force of Turks in the field, and is causing these southerners great privations.

As to their plans for the spring I could say much, but it would be obviously unfair to do so. Suffice it to say that we shall be considerably startled, though, as in the best of organizations, there is one weak point, viz., dissension in their midst. This has handicapped them before and may do so again, though I fervently trust that before the spring these differences will have been patched up.

There is one man who is a grave danger to the cause, who has done more to bring it evil repute than any one else, and that man is Boris Sarafoff, the hero of the outside world.

Again I will refrain, in the interests of the cause, from saying more.

In conclusion I would strive to answer some of the chief arguments used by the enemies of the insurgents. "The Balance of Criminality" theory is, for instance, absolutely absurd, as I have striven to prove all along. That many innocent people suffer untold misery through the activity of the bands is, alas! only too true, and it may be that they are held to be the sacrifice on the Altar of Freedom. But it

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is a case of the sacrifice of a few for the benefit of many—a hard-hearted policy, and inevitable in a war of this kind. It was the massacres of 1876 which secured Bulgaria her freedom, and it was the same in Servia in 1804. And we of Western Europe are unhappily responsible, for it is only a horrible massacre that awakens our interest in a miserable and down-trodden race. Without our interest they can achieve nothing.

It has also been stated that the Macedonian peasants themselves do not wish for a change, that they curse the inroads of the bands who persecute them, extort money, and commit I don't know how many more crimes.

As a proof of this it is pointed out that the insurrection is never general. Of course not; it is not meant to be. Had the insurgents arms and ammunition enough, they could put one hundred thousand men in the field tomorrow. Furthermore, if they had the power to do so, they would hesitate to alter the present state of affairs. A band of forty men, or even say two hundred, are far more mobile than an unwieldy force of thousands. Besides, there is the provisioning difficulty, an insurmountable one in the barren mountains. I know as a fact that thousands of peasants were sent back to their villages last summer, as their presence only embarrassed the bands.

But the bands can never be weakened. Should they lose a dozen men they can pick their recruits from a hundred able-bodied men, and therefore to talk of the destruction of a band is ridiculous. The bands too, can always keep themselves well armed, for in every other engagement with the Turks they capture rifles and ammunition.

The other accusations are of distinctly Greek origin.

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Money is the sinew of war and must be obtained, but no man is taxed beyond his means, not even a Greek, and the methods employed to obtain the money is as heaven to hell when compared with the Turkish system of annual taxation.

In the case of a war between Bulgaria and Turkey we shall very soon see what the Macedo-Bulgar peasant will do; and it is to *this* end that they are being armed, or are already. The Turks never find the arms, it is true, in spite of the searches when torture is freely applied. I was in Monastir when a house-to-house search was made in the Bulgarian quarter, and a cordon of troops drawn round it, preventing the ingress and egress of every one for two days. Not even a matchlock was found. I spoke of the matter afterwards to a Bulgarian.

"Of course we are all armed," he said, "as the Turks will find out one day to their cost. But the time is not yet come."

"But how," I objected, "can you do it when you can be searched at any moment?"

"Do you think that our preparations are so clumsily made that a *Turk* could find a rifle?" he answered scornfully. "We have rifles hidden where no one can find them, not even if they pull the house down. Remember," he added impressively, "this work has been going on for years, and when did the Turks find it out? Not till we struck. And torture has never forced us to reveal a word."

These remarks were made, by the way, by a non-combatant, a man who had been beggared by the insurrection and who had suffered imprisonment.

I think it is characteristic enough to answer the aforesaid accusations.

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Finally, be it said that the insurgents give printed receipts for every farthing they collect, payable on the accomplishment of their aims.

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Across the Border—A Contrast

ADRIANOPLE is left behind, with its magnificent mosques built in the days when Turkey was great (they have long since lost that art), and dirty crowded streets full of squalid humanity, and we have seen the last of the miserable soldiery—for which praise be to Heaven. Not the very last of them, perhaps, but at least for the time being.

The train is speeding swiftly up the valley of the Maritza, and we are entering Bulgaria. There is the first village, clean, snug, and with an almost visible atmosphere of contentment and safety. Ye gods, how different from the villages we have been visiting of late, with their dog-like inhabitants, every spark of manliness ground out of them, mere apologies of the human race; and yet it is the same race here as there.

We pull up at a station. Grey-coated, flat-capped gendarmes board the train, and John, our servant, throws his fez into the corner of the carriage, producing mysteriously a European peaked cap from the depths of a pocket. We hear him heave a sigh of contentment as he sets it jauntily on his head, and the burly gendarme smiles appreciatively, as he respectfully asks for our passports. What a different stamp of man he is too, compared with his colleague across the border. Well-fed and clothed, with smiling face despite his official air; his salute too is smart and soldierly, not the

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cringing salaam or imperious insolence which the Turk can change at will.

"Look, Bulgarian soldiers!" cried John enthusiastically, and we see masses of infantry marching lustily along the highroad. A little farther, several squadrons of cavalry are exercising on the greensward, then more infantry diligently drilling. All are hard at work, and again our thoughts fly back to Turkey, whose soldiers spend their time in sleep and slovenliness, considering drill an unnecessary evil.

'Tis as if we had left Turkey thousands of miles behind in that short hour.

At Tirnovo we pass the Customs; some little formality we have apparently neglected, and officials become stern, till John remonstrates at length, telling of our troubles in Turkey and more particularly of the early morning experience at Adrianople.

"Are we still in Turkey?" he concludes indignantly.

The officials relax and dismiss us at once. One comes to our carriage and bids the gendarme in charge of the train look after our wants.

It is very pleasant to be treated as human beings once more, and not as intruders to be annoyed.

And so we proceed to Phillipopolis, clustering prettily under the grey rocks, a town twenty years ago under the ban of the Turks, now clean, sweet, and modern.

Everywhere is the same bustling activity. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery march through the streets from their morning drill, keen men all, with a sense of the danger before them, yet with confidence in their every movement. That is the right feeling on the eve of war: not the bombastic cry, "A Berlin," but a stern determination not to be beaten.

These were my first impressions on re-entering Bulgaria,—

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PHILIPPOPOLIS.

A GROUP OF BULGAR OFFICERS.

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for I know the country from former visits,—and they were shared by every observer fresh from a sojourn in Turkey last autumn. Before judging of the relative merits of Bulgaria and Turkey, it is necessary to spend a few weeks in the one country and immediately enter the other: it does not matter which is visited first. It is only thus that a true opinion can be formed.

There was a correspondent in the Balkans last year, an officer of the British army on leave, who declared after a cursory inspection of the Bulgarian army that it would be beaten—it was too small. He visited Turkey, spending some weeks there, and soon modified his previous opinion, saying, that if Bulgaria had good generals it would win. Again he re-visited Bulgaria, and this time thoroughly inspected the army: his final verdict eliminated even the necessity of good generals.

But Bulgaria *has* good generals, and the plan of campaign is already prepared, and an excellent one it is.

Last summer, had Turkey forced a war, Bulgaria would have lost Roumelia, and been compelled to defend the Balkan passes. In the autumn the valley of the Maritza would have seen the brunt of the fighting. Now I doubt if a single action will be fought on Bulgarian territory.

Much has been said of the inherent dread that the Bulgarians have of Turkey. To anybody who knows the character of the Bulgarians this theory is laughable. They showed no fear when Russia came to help them, and, untrained and down-trodden as they were then, they still fought gallantly with their deliverers. At Slivnitza they signally defeated the Servians, and could have marched on Belgrade, had not Austria stopped them. Then they were but eight years old.

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That the insurgent bands show no inherent dread of the Turks must be admitted by all, and the men who form these bands are Bulgarians.

As for the spirit of the officers and men alike, let the following little episode speak, insignificant as it may appear at the first glance.

I was driving from Koestendil to Dubnitza, on the western border, a week or two after my arrival in Bulgaria. About halfway at a little village there was a battalion of infantry route-marching and halting for an hour's rest. Right and left of the road rows of piled arms lent an additional picturesqueness to the scene.

Hundreds of the men were idling on the market-place, and before the humble inn, where we also stopped to rest the horses.

Hardly had I descended when a private soldier accosted me, asking in German if I was of that nationality. I replied that I was not though I spoke the language, whereat he was greatly pleased. He spoke German fluently, and soon told me that he was a Government clerk called up as a Reservist. Meanwhile John had entered into conversation with some of the officers, who, on learning my profession, immediately came forward and introduced themselves. The news spread like wildfire that I was a British correspondent fresh from Macedonia: the other officers came, and soon the little square was densely packed with the soldiers.

The Major in command, to whom, oddly enough, I had a card of introduction, ordered wine; benches were brought, upon which we took our seats, and in a few minutes a hundred men were lustily dancing the "Horo" (national dance) and other quaint but most strenuous dances. Soldiers produced bag-pipes (not at all unlike the High-

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DANCING THE "HORO."

BULGAR TROOPS ON THE MARCH.

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landers'), and soon the square was full of different rings, "horo" dancing. Many of the men were in heavy marching order, yet they sprang and jumped as nimbly as if valises and great-coats were but air.

More wine was ordered, and now a huge captain jumped up and led a "horo" hand in hand with the men. There was a pause when he ceased till the battalion bugler leapt into the ring and waving his cap, shouted, "Macedonia!"

The mighty cheer that went up was something worth hearing. There was no false enthusiasm about that. Again and again that magnificeent roll of sound crashed out—for there is no more contagious and inspiriting sound than of men cheering from their very souls.

It is not always melodious music that excites us most—a roll of drums will do more to inspirit a man at times than the finest orchestra.

The recollection of that morning—I spent three hours with the battalion—was one of the pleasantest of a host of pleasant experiences in Bulgaria.

How those soldiers danced, after a long march, and with another before them, and what fine fellows the officers were; great bearded giants, as hearty in spirit as in body!

Never shall I forget the look of amazement on the faces of two other correspondents—we had met in Monastir—who suddenly arrived as we were in the act of drinking the "stirrup cup" just before the departure of the troops.

It was the same everywhere. When I arrived that evening in Dubnitza I was promptly haled off to the officers' mess of the local garrison—the same in Koestendil, the same in Samakov. Everywhere I found the same hearty men, good fellows every one: no bombastic talk, but a genuine longing for war, such as every true soldier should have.

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Could any one help contrasting these men—most of whom spoke English, French, or German—with the Turkish officers, who talked of "six hours to Sofia" and "the fear and trembling of Bulgarian border guards," etc.; men who often could not read or write, and who were but little better than savages? The conclusions were obvious.

And what was the reason of these receptions, accorded not only to me, but to all the other British correspondents? Simply this: England has twice befriended them and saved them from their "friend" Russia. England is in their eyes the cradle and home of liberty. They look to England as the *one* nation who can help them in the coming crisis.

"If only we have England's sympathy we can go to war to-morrow," was a remark constantly made to me. And there is no reason why England should not give this brave little people at least her sympathy. They are *not* seeking self-aggrandisement, whatever may be maintained to the contrary, they are simply doing what the U.S. did when suffering Cuba could stand no more, and what England did in the Transvaal. Was it not the cry of the Uitlanders in Johannesburg—our flesh and blood—that caused us to go to war with their oppressors? And how much worse is the case of Bulgaria and Macedonia, *door on door*, so that the wails of the tortured are heard by the Bulgarian border guards. This is no idle phrase of sentiment. I was told by an officer in command of a frontier post, how they often heard at night the screams of the Christian peasants in the villages but a few yards across the border.

Let us glance back at the history of the Bulgarian nation to understand better the character of this people. At the present time it may prove instructive, the more so as present Macedonian and past Bulgarian history form a striking

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parallel. For more than five hundred years Bulgaria as such ceased to exist. Firstly, it was crushed by the Turks, as is Macedonia to-day, and what spark of nationality was left was ruthlessly extinguished by the Greek clergy, who wantonly burnt their libraries and records. Greeks drove out the native priests and the vernacular scriptures, and aided the Turks in the oppression of the Bulgar, precisely as they are now doing in Macedonia. Even the Cyrillic alphabet was abolished.

A few abortive risings were attempted in the fifteenth century, but it was not till the nineteenth century that Bulgarian nationalism began to awake. Again history has repeated itself in the fact that it was left to the so-called bandits to revive the almost extinct patriotism. Bands scoured the land formed of despairing Bulgars who could stand no more, and, as to-day, the Turks were powerless against them. To-day the stories of their doings are sung in many a stirring ballad, and we hear how the villagers welcomed these brave "Haidutin" (the Haiduks in Servia performed the same deeds), who protected the weak and defied the mighty Turk in their rocky fastnesses.

But it was not till 1835 that the first Bulgarian school was established, and that the native language began to displace the Greek. To a Russian named Vidolin, who wrote a history of Bulgaria, the Bulgarians of to-day owe this first important step. It awakened their dormant patriotism, and led to the expulsion of the Greek priests, and finally to the severance of the Bulgarian Church from the Greek and the establishment of the Exarchate in 1870. It must be admitted that the Turks themselves helped in this national movement.

Within thirty-five years the Bulgarians regained their

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nationality after, roughly, five hundred years of extinction. This alone speaks wonders for their virility.

The advancement in the last thirty years is even more remarkable.

In 1875 an insurrection in the Herzegovina broke out and set the whole of Eastern Europe ablaze (as I venture to predict will happen in 1904 in Macedonia). The stolid, hitherto peaceable Bulgarians caught the infection and rose against the Turks. The result of this feeble rising is modern history: how the Turks crushed it with their usual ferocity, so that a wave of righteous indignation spread over Europe when it heard of the massacre of Batak. To-day, it is true, we listen to such tales with indifference, but perhaps we were more humane a quarter of a century ago.

Those wretched peasants were sacrificed on the altar of freedom, but in this case not in vain. Russia came to their help, and Bulgaria in 1878 became a free country once more, at any rate in name, for Russia's yoke proved well-nigh harder to bear than the Turkish.

But again the Bulgarians rose to the occasion. Russia was ejected and the country learnt to walk alone. Within eight years, at the moment Russia left the country to its fate, withdrawing all her officers from the scarcely organized army, Servia declared war. Bulgaria crushed Servia in one blow, to the amazement of Europe.

Since then her history has been marred by some terrible crimes, but these are more than outweighed by the enormous strides she has made towards civilization. We cannot expect, in common justice, that an Eastern people should become in twenty-five years a model state, yet Bulgaria to-day is not far away from this goal.

There is not a foreigner in her service; Bulgarians teach

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TAKING THE OATH.

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in her high schools, Bulgarians rule the country, and Bulgarians lead her army. And only sixty years ago the Bulgarians re-learnt their own language.

It is a truly marvellous record. No wonder the Greeks view the Bulgarian Macedonians with such hatred, born of fear; for what their brethren in freedom have done—sixty years ago the same ignorant, down-trodden peasants as they are to-day, and more so—they can do to-morrow.

In spite of the hatred which Bulgarians inspire, they have always won the respect of their adversaries. What we do not fear we despise, but we do not hate.

A prominent Greek merchant in Salonica once told me, after a most virulent attack on the Bulgarians, that, after all, one Bulgarian workman was worth five Greeks or Turks.

Sir Frank Lascelles told the Bulgarians before he left Sofia that they possessed more common-sense than any people he knew; and it is perfectly true.

There is no Balkan state, not even excepting Montenegro, that should appeal more to England than this little country, which has made itself in twenty-five years.

To expect a high standard of civilization is absurd. Servia, with a hundred years of freedom, has stained itself for all time by a crime committed on the very brink of its centenary. We must not forget that the Eastern character is very different from ours. Human life is held more cheaply, and no wonder, when Turkey, the late master of these lands, lets murderers go unpunished to-day. If an Oriental, be he Serb, Bulgar, Montenegrin, or Albanian, has an enemy, the simplest remedy in his eyes is to remove him from this world. But Western civilization is slowly working its way into the Balkans, and in no country more than in Bulgaria.

I have met there the most courteous and polished gentle-

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men, who have conversed in faultless English learnt at the Robert College at Constantinople, and it has been a great effort to realize that their fathers were rude peasants, like the Macedonians of to-day, as a diplomatist once laughingly told me. Many of the officers, Macedonians by birth, spick and span in neat uniforms, and in no way different in bearing and conversation from the smart Continental officer, have related stories of their childhood in squalid Turkish towns or villages. These men have migrated in thousands to Bulgaria, entered that country's service, and travelled for study in other lands. It is to this love of travelling in the interests of learning that the modern Bulgarian owes so much. The men who fill the learned positions have all studied either in Vienna, Paris, Berlin, or St. Petersburg.

A Macedonian I met in Monastir who spoke excellent German, had learnt that language in Leipzig, where he had lived many years as clerk in a merchant's office. Yet he had thrown up his berth and returned to his country because it had need of him.

On another occasion a major in one of the Bulgarian border garrisons asked me,—after a delightful evening spent in his company, during which he had beguiled the time by singing well-known Italian airs, accompanying himself most exquisitely on the mandoline,—if I knew a certain village in Macedonia. By chance I had once visited it, a typical Turkish village, peopled by typical miserable Macedonian peasants, and I told him so.

"It was my birthplace," he answered quietly, and began singing, "Ah! che la morte."

I have met Bulgarian officers on lonely border posts laboriously teaching themselves English from a grammar,

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and once a brother correspondent and myself conversed many hours in a little far-away provincial town with the local judge, a young man, yet who "speaks better English than we do," as my comrade laughingly and truly remarked, for he had an amazing knowledge of legal technical terms.

These are but a few examples picked at random. They must show that the stuff the Bulgarian is made of is of the right sort. I shall doubtless be accused of prejudice, though I can be borne out by many of my countrymen who have met the Bulgars as I have done—not in Sofia, but in the provincial towns, where one sees the inside of a nation far better than in the invariable atmosphere of reserve which pervades a capital.

Of all the Balkan nations they are undoubtedly the finest; and will ultimately succeed. The Servians, whom I know least about, do not inspire confidence, though *once* they were the greatest nation. A famous historian (de la Jonquière) called them "a brave, poetic, careless, frivolous race" who "have never attempted to assimilate the remains of ancient culture." But this is certain; that such a crime as was committed last June in Servia could never have occurred in Bulgaria to-day. Montenegro I love, but it is the love for a race of warriors and natural courtiers, who also have done much to improve themselves the last twenty-five years, but, there, alas! poverty and corruption still go hand in hand. Mr. Miller has made a comparison between Bulgaria and Montenegro, with which, however, I do not entirely agree. "The Montenegrin is the exact opposite of the Bulgarian. Put both in a drawing-room, and the Montenegrin, who has never bowed his neck to a foreign master, will look and behave like a gentleman, while the Bulgarian . . . will look and behave like a boor. But put the two upon a

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waste plot of ground, and the Bulgarian will convert it into a garden of roses, while the Montenegrin will look on." The Bulgarian, however, makes himself into a perfect gentleman the moment he travels, for, adept as he is in converting waste ground into rose gardens, he is equally capable of adopting the manners and instincts of civilization. My meaning would be made still more clear could, for instance, a minister of Montenegro and a minister of Bulgaria be put in a drawing-room.

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BULGAR BLOCKHOUSE.

MY FRIENDS.

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At a Border Block-house

"FAMILIARITY breeds contempt" is a well-proven saying amongst the sturdy Bulgarian frontier garrisons, both as applied to the Turks individually and to danger collectively.

During the long morning's ride we have passed many a detachment of Bulgar infantry holding small villages along the high road to pretty little Koestendil, drilling diligently and standing stiffly at the attention as our little cavalcade trotted past. Beyond the block-houses on the summit of the furthermost ridge, gleaming white from a sombre background of green foliage, are many thousands of Turkish troops, almost without discipline, ill clad, and extremely discontented from weeks of most unsatisfactory guerilla warfare. Here is danger, real and lively, very different from the reassuring atmosphere of Sofia and Constantinople, where diplomatists exchange notes and visits, and the destinies of little nations are decided in far-away cities, to international satisfaction.

"Over there," remarks the smart young adjutant of dragoons, pointing with his riding-whip to a small village clustering upon a far-away hillside, "a battalion of Turks raided a week or two ago. Unluckily, we had but a handful of men to oppose them, and reinforcements arrived only to pick up the nine men left behind."

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"Our squadron came up an hour too late. It was a long march," adds his youthful comrade apologetically. "Still, we have hopes of future raids, when we shall be nearer."

We glance admiringly at our guard of honour, two as smart and well set-up young cavalry subalterns as could be seen in any crack cavalry regiment in more Western lands. They speak many languages, and their talk is good to hear after the inanities of barbarous and illiterate Turkish officers. It was last night we had met them, borne suddenly into their midst by a bluff colonel, our rescuer from the hands of the picket, who had stringent orders to arrest any strangers out after dark without permits, and who were carrying us off to the guard-room.

Evenings with Bulgarian officers are trying even to the strongest constitution, but how merry! Then it was that we expressed our desire to ride to the frontier, and lo! two officers, an orderly and a troop horse, awaited us this morning.

We climb the last ridge slowly, for it is steep, towards the two block-houses, scarcely a hundred yards apart, upon its summit. Bulgar sentries, in long great-coats and flat caps, march smartly to and fro with fixed bayonets, watchful, keen, alert. A few yards away loll the Turks, in hated fez and ragged uniform. There are 200 of them behind the Turkish block-house, outnumbering the Bulgars by six to one. "Rather heavy odds," we remark; but the bearded lieutenant and commandant of this lonely station only smiles.

"We are not afraid," he says, and conducts us into his quarters, whilst soldiers swiftly discover tablecloths, glass, and other accessories for the much-needed meal. A ride of twenty miles across the high-lying downs creates healthy

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THE BOMBS.

SALUTING A RIVAL.

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appetites, and as we feast the lieutenant discourses on the monotony of his post.

"It is not as if my neighbours were cultivated men," he says, nodding towards the Turks. "We have not a single topic of conversation. Later we will take our coffee with them, and you shall judge for yourselves."

The time passes quickly and pleasantly. We are shown captured bombs, heavy cylinders used for blowing up buildings, and the dreaded hand grenade, whose short fuse is calmly ignited by a burning cigarette and hurled amongst the attacking Turks. A man must indeed have nerves of iron to do this deed. Picture a devoted handful of men surrounded by an overwhelming force of infuriated Turks slowly but surely drawing ever nearer. Now they are a hundred yards away, fifty yards—luckily they shoot abominably—but it is too far to "put the weight" with effect. They must wait, though here and there a bullet aimed at random thins out the little band. A rush—*Now*. See! one coolly lights the fuse, and quickly hurls it at the foe. He must make no mistake, his aim must be correct and his arm strong. A slip at the moment of throwing means his and his comrades' lives instead of the Turks', for the fuse is very short. But he has thrown well; the Turks see it coming, and halt in blind fear. A deafening crash, screams and yells of anguish, and the Turks break and run, shot down by the triumphant insurgents. Down into the valleys they fly, to the nearest village, where their officers, anxious to save to themselves a semblance of authority, order its massacre and pillage. And next day we read of the extermination of another band.

"Those are the heights of Sultan-tepi," remarks the lieutenant, as we smoke our cigarettes outside, gazing on

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the glorious expanse of rolling hills, and he tells us of a fight which he and many other officers witnessed through glasses ten days ago, when 111 insurgents were surrounded by 4,000 Turks, and fought for three days. On the third night the gallant little band, bombarded two long days in the forest by artillery, fought their way out at night with bombs, recrossing the frontier without the loss of a man.

"And what do the Turks say?" we ask.

"Oh, they admit 250 killed and wounded, but declare they wiped out the band."

And we all laugh, for we saw and spoke with the band in Sofia but a day or two ago, when brought down under a considerate and friendly escort of Bulgarian gendarmes.

A few minutes later and we are once more in Turkish territory. Under the shade of a small oak sits and squats a quaint assembly, sipping black coffee and blowing clouds of fragrant smoke. Side by side alternately sit Bulgarian cavalryman, in neat, picturesque uniform, and Turkish officer, ragged, unkempt, and sloven. The Turkish captain is an aged man, who admits sixty-one years of life, beside him the Bulgarian lieutenant, strong, tanned by sun and wind, and less than half his age. Next to him is the first lieutenant, a toothless old reprobate of forty-nine, who bares his gums in a hideous grin as he talks obscenely of the joys of the harem.

"'Tis all he can talk about," says the Bulgar lieutenant in an apologetic voice, "and the others cannot talk at all."

Still, it is a strange sight, and recalls the story told us once in Adrianople, when a young and foolish Turkish subaltern described the abject fear of the Bulgarian frontier guards, who trembled when he spoke to them.

It is worth recording, and we put our camera to rights.

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COFFEE ACROSS THE BORDER.

SPEEDING THE PARTING GUEST.

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AT A BORDER BLOCK-HOUSE

"Stop," says the Turkish lieutenant excitedly; "what wilt thou do? Not photograph us, for I am not in my best uniform?"

"Assuredly not," we respond mendaciously, as the camera clicks, and we fold it up once more, to the Turk's gracious thanks. The Bulgars, however, wink approvingly.

But time is flying, and when the Turkish lieutenant has concluded a childish rhyme in Greek, setting forth the charms of Western women, we depart. He accompanies us to the Bulgarian side, chuckling inanely because he and his company care not if they are unpaid.

"Our captain is a rich man. He has saved much money during his long life. If the Government does not pay us ultimately, we still have the old man to rob."

And he rambles foolishly on till the Bulgar catches a small pig and fondles it casually under the Turk's nose. With a gesture of disgust he relieves us of his presence.

As we ride down the ridge, the lieutenant winks comically, and, turning in his saddle, he laughs aloud.

"Now you see why we are not afraid," he says, "in spite of 'the heavy odds.'"

"We understand," is our response, in a tone of conviction.

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Rilo and Rilo Monastery

"I HAVE found a room," says Dimitri with a joyful countenance, "and the view is wonderful."

"'Tis good," we respond laconically, though inwardly rejoicing. The prospect of a night in this most miserable of hans—where unclean beds lie like sardines in a tin, and below in the courtyard the mud is ankle deep and reeking—was far from pleasing.

At the further end of the village of Rilo, straggling irregularly along the banks of the noisy torrent, stands our abode, clean and sweet, and commanding a view of snow-capped mountains for which Swiss innkeepers would charge exorbitantly. Huge rocks have tumbled down the ravine, constructing massive gateways, through which the little road turns and twists beside the roaring stream. Some of the distant peaks glisten fitfully as a gust of wind clears away the clouds for a brief moment. Down their vast slopes stretches the virginal snow of the first autumnal fall, white and delicate like powdered sugar. Cold as it is, we sit long upon the verandah watching the everchanging panorama, as clouds lift and fall, disclosing fresh beauties.

Then we visit the nuns, still worldly enough to show obvious pleasure at the appearance in their midst of British travellers. We talk platitudes and escape after disposing of very evil-tasting liqueurs, which make the newcomer to

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the Balkans pull wry faces as politely as he can. Burly soldiers slink away as we emerge once more outside, and we fear that the holy nuns are very human, for surely those were giggles, and very feminine ones at that, that we heard a moment before.

The room next to ours is occupied by a captain of infantry and the sole officer in Rilo. We waylay him as he enters, somewhat uncertain as to what language to address him in, but he solves the difficulty by speaking in English. Like all his comrades, he is enthusiastic at our presence and invites us straightway to his quarters.

Supper is spread in his room, with contributions from us, and we feast together till our watches proclaim the witching hour of nine, the midnight of mountaineering travellers.

We have conversed on many topics, on war and the Turk as a matter of course, on the captain's lonely post, and on the subject of diet, when the captain becomes fanatical. He advocates grapes and milk as the only true food, but we are fain to disagree.

"Well enough in their way," says Jimmy, "but give me an occasional repast of meat."

This motion is carried by a majority of two to one.

It is nine o'clock before we start for the Monastery next morning. We have a steady climb of four hours before us, up that gloomy ravine, threading our way tortuously between lofty ridges of forest-clad mountain, a very kaleidoscope of colour. Leaving our steeds far behind, we tramp briskly forwards, keenly enjoying the nipping air and unparalleled view. Patrols with fixed bayonets we pass constantly, but no one stops us, in spite of the fact that permits are necessary in these parts. They salute us smartly and wish us a pleasant journey, telling us the distance

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THE MONASTERY, RILO.

THE MONASTERY CHURCH.

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still to be covered. (It was only a few days later that an unlucky German correspondent was summarily arrested and marched down under guard as a suspicious character.)

That walk to Rilo Monastery, with its grand mountains, the picturesque log huts and humming saw mills beside the foaming torrent, will long remain in our memories. Truly, in autumn God has given us an ample recompense for the departed summer. Other pens than this have painted the glories of autumnal tints, but seldom were they so brought home to us as on the Rilo mountains. It was one long feast of colour.

Suddenly, barring our way across the narrow valley, rose a massive wall pierced by a great gateway and deep-set windows. Rilo Monastery at last!

There can be few more striking buildings in the world. It is when inside the huge courtyard that the unique effect is most felt. A square, four stories high, painted vividly in black and white, surrounds the newcomer; in the centre is the church, an almost gaudy Byzantine edifice; beside it an ancient and very majestic tower, the oldest part of the Monastery. Galleries run round the entire length, now thronged with hundreds of Macedonian refugees. Black cassocked monks with the Greek sugar-loaf hat hurry to and fro, while grey-coated, flat-capped soldiers and smart gendarmes lend a military air to this strange scene. Seemingly overhanging the vast building rise the lofty mountains, now sparkling with fresh fallen snow in the sunlight. It is a wonderful sight, and we linger on the gallery as a monk leads us to our cell, a comfortably furnished apartment on the first floor, No. 87 (which gives some idea of the vast number of rooms).

Then the monks come and visit us, bearing us off to their

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Abbot's room, where we are regaled with sweet conserves, coffee and spirits, and take us over the church and the library crammed with holy relics of most beautiful workmanship; numberless gold and bejewelled crosses borne once upon a time by the monks as a badge of office when visiting their flocks in far-away villages; wonderfully illuminated vellums, the charters from long dead Sultans; gigantic candles presented by forgotten princes, one even from the Sultan Amuruth, who broke for ever the Serb Empire on the bloody field of Kossovo. The church itself is most curious, with its weird and crude frescoes of most vivid colouring, and its altar screen a mass of gilt; while decorating (!) the outside walls are ghastly pictures of the torments of hell, depicted with true Oriental fervour. How sad to see a religion dependent on these horrors for the belief of its adherents, playing thus on the credulity of ignorant peasants!

Then we are taken up the ancient tower to the tiny chapel on the topmost floor, where once a month a Mass is celebrated, and down into the dungeon without light or air, and shown the iron rings to which unhappy madmen were chained in olden times, till they had beaten out their brains in savage frenzy upon these massive walls. Shuddering, we emerge, to realize that there is something in modern civilization after all.

We inspect the refugees and their quarters. They are mostly women, children, and old men. Poor wretches, they have found peace, warmth, and food at least, but all that was dear to them, husbands, honour, home, is lost. Their stories? The same as we have heard countless times in Macedonia—a fight in the neighbourhood, the arrival of infuriated Turkish soldiers, then massacre, violation, plunder,

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and fire. There are 800 here now, last week there were over 2,000, but they have been taken into the interior of Bulgaria to more comfortable lodgings. To-morrow more will arrive with fresh stories of mutilation and horror.

A sound of singing, deep-chested and melodious, approaches. It is the Bulgarian infantryman's marching song. Now it echoes sonorously, and bending over the balustrades we see the company stationed in the Monastery swing in with the slow springing stride of the mountaineer after their afternoon drill on the little square outside the walls.

Later on in the evening we hear them again, as we sit in our well-warmed cell over the remnants of a sumptuous meal, with a flagon of the monks' best wine between us, singing the "Evening Hymn" to the martial accompaniment of a roll of drums. Ere the echo has died away we go out on to the corridor. The moon is shining brightly, illuminating the great courtyard with her silver light, throwing fantastic shadows over the chequered walls and church. Beyond are the gloomy pines, chequered too where a clearing shows a patch of snow, and soaring away into the starlit heavens rise the wild peaks. Then all is still. The soldiers have quickly retired to their rooms. There is not a sound to disturb this perfect harmony of black and white. The sentry with his gleaming bayonet makes no sound as he paces to and fro in his soft solid opankis, and then we shiver, for the cold is very intense.

Back into our well-warmed room we go, pipes are refilled, and we talk. Ah! how a man can talk in such surroundings.

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In the Rilo Mountains

THAT night we dreamt a wonderful dream. We were in a gloomy forest of pine, and it was very dark, when suddenly a chime of sweet bells rang out of the stillness, and we stood before a gleaming temple listening to a choir of men's voices, which filled the very forest with sound and light. Dreams break off unaccountably, and so it is this morning when, at six o'clock, we are pitilessly routed out into the stinging cold by the malignant Dimitri. With true Oriental leisure our traps are packed and laded up, and at eight o'clock we take our farewell of the Abbot (who inquires if the midnight Mass disturbed us), and of the monks and attentive gendarmes at the further gate of the monastery.

The sergeant of gendarmes is doubtful as to the wisdom of our intended journey across the mountains to Samakov, and questions our boy sharply for the tenth time if he knows the way. With many curses he replies that he has crossed the mountains a score of times.

"But much snow has fallen," remarks the sergeant, still inclined to doubt.

We turn to the monks, who say they think the journey may be made in safety.

"It is but seven hours," says one, and Jimmy, the energetic, grows impatient to be off. He has set his heart upon this ride and tramp across some of the finest mountains

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in the Balkans. The morning is glorious, a clear sky, and the mountain ridges still tinged with the crimson promise of a day of sunshine. It is far too cold to ride, and we step off briskly, leaving the horses and baggage to follow at a more leisurely gait. Sloping gently upwards, the first hour is soon passed, and at a divergence of the paths we wait, listening for the crackle of breaking ice as our horses plod through frozen puddles.

"To the left," says our boy and guide, but soon the path dwindles away and is lost. In a foot of snow we come to a halt, whilst the boy admits that this is not the way, to Dimitri's intense and outspoken indignation. For many minutes the ravine echoes to the profane remonstrances of Dimitri and the no less blasphemous retorts of the boy, who ultimately takes a horse and retraces his steps.

We wait half an hour in a clearing, basking in the sun, now topping the imprisoning ridge. Had we been wise, we should have retraced our steps to the monastery, hired a guide, and started our journey afresh, but we were of buoyant and unheeding spirits, believing childishly the boy when he returned crying that he had found the right path.

Again we start, following a mountain torrent purling and roaring at our side, through a dense forest of pines, with here and there a glimpse of mountains rising almost perpendicularly above us. A light carpet of snow has filtered down between the branches, powdering the crisp earth under our feet. There are many obstacles to vary the monotony of the way, in the form of huge trunks fallen straight across the path. Some are easily circumvented, but one bids fair to bar further progress for good and all. The torrent at our end and a huge rock at the other make a détour impossible.

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IN THE RILO MOUNTAINS.

IN THE RILO MOUNTAINS.

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"Oh, for a squad of pioneers," murmurs the martial Jimmy, as we gloomily survey the enormous block of timber.

"Looks as if the path wasn't used much," I hazard, wondering if we were on the right track after all.

But Jimmy rises to the occasion, profiting by previous campaigning experiences, and, by dint of pulling in front and shoving behind, we literally push our ponies over, though each provokes our risibility when helplessly stretched across the log.

Then we climb, zigzagging, for a solid two hours up the end of the ravine, comforted by the foolish belief that one cannot climb for ever. Besides, our boy cheerfully declares that in an hour we shall reach the summit, and then it is a clear drop to Samakov.

Oh! accursed liar, and son of a liar.

Wet with sweat and snow brushed off the branches, we emerge on the top of the ravine, to find the stream merrily flowing downwards still and no encouraging trickle in the other direction to show us that the watershed is crossed.

"We will get over our climb first," Jimmy had said, "and then, resting on the top, with a view of Samakov at our feet, we can doubly enjoy our repast, knowing our labours are o'er."

It had sounded well, and I had agreed, but as it is now one o'clock, and the stream running with unabated vigour (Jimmy thought it must be fed by a big lake a few hundred yards away, but I was always sceptical of this, having long since lost my faith in Oriental guides), we decide to halt here. Spreading our coats on the snow, we chop a chicken in twain, and rend it with our fingers. It is a luscious meal, and the wine perfection. Singing blithely, we start again,

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the weary climb forgotten, and even I am now prepared to accept the theory of a lake. Up we climb for two hours or more beside that accursed stream, till we begin to believe that Nature is playing us a cruel practical joke.

"It must come from heaven," says Jimmy, and we laugh somewhat forcedly.

We are above the belt of vegetation in a vast cauldron, but the mountains imprisoning us are as lofty as those when we left Rilo. We never knew that there were such high mountains, and we turn with oaths on the boy.

"How now, thou villain!" we cry, pointing at the wall of snow all round us. "Where is that view of Samakov awaiting us at the top of this condemned ravine? Are we to climb over *that*, too?" we demand, pointing at a precipice before us.

The boy nods foolishly, but savagely. It is plain that he is as lost as we are, and the prospect is not pleasing in that lone expanse of snow and stunted bush peering here and there through its fleecy covering.

It is then that a shot rings out—oh! blessed sound! and we see a man leaping nimbly on the steep side nearest us. We hail him, and, fearful lest he should escape, we ride towards him at the best pace our ponies can go. He comes wonderingly towards us, an old man, but as active as a goat, and we recognize in his brown homespun clothes, bandolier, and rifle, an insurgent.

"Would ye go in *this* direction to Samakov?" he asks somewhat scornfully. "Another hour and ye were across the border, and would have been shot by the first Turkish patrol."

We promise him untold wealth if he but show us the path to Samakov. We do not wish, we say, to cross the border.

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"Good," he replied; "I will put ye on the path, but ye cannot reach Samakov to-night. It is ten good hours from this spot, and the way is hard."

We glance at our watches—past three, and ten hours to this man means fifteen to us—and then at each other blankly. But Jimmy is blithe.

"We are tough," he says cheerfully; "and, besides, there is no alternative."

The logic is unanswerable.

"Follow the path trodden in the snow," says the ancient man-at-arms, pointing up the side of the wall. "Ye cannot miss it, it is fresh made by a band that passed but a few hours since, and God go with you."

He pockets his gift gratefully, and we start up the mountain, too steep to ride, and deep in snow. It is one of the most trying climbs that I can recollect, and wicked thoughts are in my mind as I cough up that ascent, watching Jimmy, to whom I can give three stone, skipping lightly up and shouting down encouragement. If I am angry, Dimitri is more. Poor man, when I brought him from the sun-scorched plains of Salonica he little dreamt of mountaineering in the snow on altitudes he had never even seen.

Somewhere near the top we call a halt. One path goes on over the summit of the vast hogbacked ridge, and the other stretches parallel as far as the eye can see. A flock of chamois are gambolling four hundred yards away.

Now even the genial Jimmy is grave. It is four o'clock, which means another hour and a half of light. There is not a human being or habitation within reach, and we are as utterly lost as if cast down in the middle of the Sahara. The cold is intense (we were at an altitude of close on

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8,000 feet, as we discovered afterwards), and our only chance of ever getting anywhere is to follow one of two tracks, which a snowstorm or high wind could obliterate in five minutes. Luckily the heavens are clear. All round stretch naked cold mountains, deep in snow, an unparalleled view under normal circumstances, and one worth tramping hours to see, but *now* bitterly cruel.

We have three courses before us: to try the path over the ridge, or the parallel path, or return to the valley below, making for ourselves a rude shelter for the night and descending once more to the monastery to-morrow. The last seems the most sensible, but we decide on the second, sending on the boy—who is glad enough to escape from our proximity, which he evidently considers dangerous—with orders to send back help at the first village. Poor fools, we still fondly imagine that two or three hours away there must be a village.

Then we mount—I landing on my left shoulder in the snow at the first attempt, from sheer fatigue—and ride on. Goodness knows how long we rode, every bend showing us that path still stretching across the snow of this never-ending ridge. Jimmy has disappeared round a corner, the boy has long since vanished, and Dimitri, with the led baggage horse, which gets half buried every hundred yards, and has to be painfully extricated, and I, plod thoughtfully on. My horse flounders and falls, giving me another snow bath, but proceedings have now become mechanical till I hear Jimmy's "Coo-ee" in the distance. Then there follows a shot. At last the end of the interminable ridge is reached, and there are men with horses climbing slowly towards us.

I see Jimmy gesticulating wildly and hallooing some-

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thing, which at last I interpret to mean something about a guide.

With feet frozen to lumps of ice and biting wind chilling me to the very marrow, I accost the cavalcade. They are insurgents convoying a dozen ponies laden with food and ammunition to a band in eruption across the border. A picturesque ruffian promptly offers to come with us. It is good Angelico, of whom much more anon, and I see him now, his cheerful swarthy countenance with its gleaming teeth, for he was ever smiling; his neat uniform of black serge, white gaiters to the knee, with embroidered crosses upon them, crossed bandoliers well filled with cartridges, traversing his broad breast and round his waist (he was carrying 200 rounds), and rifle slung from shoulder. I was too tired to notice the others, but I mentally apostrophized Angelico as our guardian angel. Certainly he would guide us to Samakov.

"But," I ask," how far to the nearest village?"

"Three hours," he answers genially.

"That will do," I answer, for it is half-past five, and the light is failing fast.

"Jimmy," I cry, "at eight, or nine at the latest, our troubles will be over."

And we push on blithely down that great gorge, all unheeding a stupendous mountain before us, the highest of all as yet; but with our eyes on the valley which drops away at its side.

Angelico invites us to try shots at stones and rocks with his rifle, and he approves our marksmanship with cheerful grins. We feel like men who have successfully surmounted a trying ordeal and owe ourselves a little recreation.

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But we cross the gorge, and, before we are aware of it, are heading up that colossus before us.

"Great Scot, have we got to climb that, too?" ejaculates Jimmy. "Why, we've been climbing since eight this morning. Looks as if there was no downhill at all in these forsaken mountains."

I groan audibly, but Angelico laughs merrily.

"It is the *very* last one," he says soothingly, "and the village is then quite close, where I shall find ye most comfortable beds, food, and — think of the roaring fire."

"Well, there can't be any larger mountain than this," adds Jimmy, and we peer blankly at the mass of snow jutting up into the fast darkening sky.

We do reach the top. It is eight o'clock, and pitch dark. What we should have done without a guide the Lord only knows. Below twinkle the lights of the village. Oh, how close they look; and, a stone's throw farther, more lights, those of Samakov.

"How far?" we ask mechanically.

"Only two hours," comes the ever cheerful voice of Angelico out of the darkness.

We curse him, for did he not say three hours in all to this haven of rest now a full three hours ago? He heeds not our ingratitude, and during that descent, when the hours multiplied and did not decrease, he ever maintained that laughing voice of indifference to our plaints and offensive remarks. (N.B.—Afterwards he told us that, seeing how tired we were when he first met us, he intentionally lied "to keep our spirits up.")

But what a view we should have had from this summit, though why the road was made over the very topmost

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LOST.

FOUND.

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pinnacle of one of the very highest peaks in the neighbourhood passed our understanding.

The walk down the mountain is like a bad dream. It is too steep and far too dangerous to ride, and down we flounder, one moment gasping at the edge of a precipice, the next up to our waists in a snowdrift. All the long climb drawn out in the past twelve hours is concentrated in these last three hours' sharp drop. The village lights are will-o'-the-wisps, receding from our hungry gaze. We are dead-beat, only Jimmy keeps up a semblance of good spirits, though even he confesses that this is his record. As for Dimitri, he frankly owns that he thinks he is dying, and plainly indicates that in his opinion I have basely lured him on to his miserable fate. I turn upon him and rend him with words; Jimmy pushes on out of earshot. Two hours of this, and suffering nature gives out. A chasm of inky darkness yawns before us. It is a pine forest. We do not believe Angelico any longer, and we half decide to camp here for the night. At least we are out of the snow, and shall not freeze. We have a bottle of wine left, but the cold has turned it sour, and we hurl it from us.

Again Angelico prevails, and, walking on each other's heels, we plunge into the darkness of the forest. It is our last trial, for when we emerge we are in the valley, and can ride once more. One village we pass through, barked at viciously by a score of dogs. Angelico is adamant here. "The next village is only a quarter of an hour away, and much larger," he says. "There I have friends, and this *is* the truth, by God."

Dimitri is in a terrible state. He can neither walk nor ride, and a fever has seized him, so he declares in pitiful accents. To-morrow, he prophesies, he will be seriously ill.

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Two men with rifles, clad in sheepskins, start up out of the darkness, but they are friends of Angelico, who dispatches them ahead to warn the burgomaster, and a few seconds later houses surround us, and we plash through slush and puddles till Angelico bids us dismount before a house which is illuminated. He runs up the steps, and bearded faces peer through the window at the sound. A conversation follows, whilst we stand freezing but indifferent below.

"It is all right," comes Angelico's cheery voice; "come up here."

We obey, but discover that Dimitri is missing, and Angelico, after ushering us inside, departs hurriedly in quest of him.

We walk into a fiercely heated room, blinded at first by the light, and discover ourselves in the midst of a band of insurgents, the burgomaster shaking us respectfully by the hand. When we have collapsed on a bed we gaze upon our hosts. Bearded and bronzed, all young and sturdy fellows, clad in the brown homespun uniform now so familiar to us, peaked European caps on their heads, and white embroidered leggings. Two or three are rolling us cigarettes, another is brewing us a cordial on the red-hot stove, and when, a few minutes later, it has coursed like fire through our veins, a few puffs of fragrant tobacco smoke inhaled—lo! our fatigue is forgotten like a bad dream of the night. Rifles are stacked in a corner, bales of provisions and ammunition form lounges for these warriors, and trumpets are hanging on the otherwise bare whitewashed walls.

Angelico rejoins us soon with the missing Dimitri, and one of the band tells us of Angelico's cunning with the trumpet: how he knows all the Turkish calls, and blows

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them to lure battalions to their death. And Angelico, nothing loth, takes a trumpet and blows the Turkish bugle march, deafening our ears and amazing us greatly. He gives a further selection of Turkish bugle calls, and recounts the last time he played the march "across the border," which resulted in the "bag" of a whole company of Turks.

Meanwhile, in another house, our beds are being prepared, and when we are led thither we find a score of villagers awaiting us with milk and wine and food, each eager to make us comfortable, a dozen hands unstrapping our bags, others pulling off our boots. We are too tired to eat, and sleep to the accompaniment of the excited villagers' talk, startled only into a momentary wakefulness by stentorian "sshs" of the more considerate.

And Angelico, who has already marched fourteen hours that day, when we are soundly asleep starts off to Samakov, three hours distant, to order a carriage, and is back again before we are awake, awaiting us with coffee and milk next morn, as fresh as if that very moment he had risen from a twelve hours' sleep in bed.

Angelico, here are our very best respects. You are one of the right sort, and may you live to see your country free.

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The Lighter Side

A HUGE bare room, two or three martial pictures on the wall, and sitting round a long table set out for a meal, a score of Bulgarian officers. It is the mess of the mountain batteries stationed in Samakov. Trim, well-set-up young fellows they are, smart in their dark blue double-breasted tunics and black velvet facings, springing smartly to their feet as the Major ushers us into their midst. There are a few other guests, a staff captain, one or two infantrymen and a dragoon subaltern, all tanned to a deep red by the fierce sun and biting wind from the mountains.

We are greeted warmly with a hearty handshake and installed at the head of the table, whilst an artillery subaltern remonstrates with his major that he did not warn them.

"He is always doing this," he remarks apologetically to us in French.

A gigantic gunner, the mess waiter (he must have been 6 feet 6 inches), sets food before us, and when we have eaten our fill and the wine flagons have been more than once emptied, those officers who speak foreign languages congregate around us. There is one battery commandant, a bearded captain, who speaks German, and a subaltern who has studied in Vienna, one who speaks French, and another Italian, whilst the Major puzzles us in English. There were others too trying us in Russian, Hungarian, and other uncouth languages. In this babel of tongues we can scarce

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hold our own, but we are very happy. A man can travel far before he can meet a more congenial company than the Bulgar officers.

The French-speaking subaltern sings us a song with a rousing chorus. He has a fine baritone, and gives us "Dio possente" as an *encore*. Jimmy basely betrays me, and I give them "The Midshipmite," but my revenge soon comes, and Jimmy must make a speech, impassioned and fiery, and he thunders at the admiring circle sentiments of liberty, and the glory of a soldier's life. If Jimmy cannot sing, he can make a speech, and, not to be confined to this one kind of entertainment, he gives us an exhibition of the British cavalry sword exercise, amidst a scene of wild enthusiasm, with the sabre of the dragoon.

The Major follows on the mandolin, which he plays really well, and in a series of most eloquent speeches we drink to the health of the King—God bless him—Prince Ferdinand, the Bulgarian and the British armies; even the British correspondents are not forgotten.

The mess waiter solemnly presents us with postcards, duly addressed, stamped and postmarked, bearing views of the batteries at drill, which an officer has secretly dispatched to the local post office during dinner, and Jimmy makes a speech in French. Ye gods, how hard to keep one's face at such a trying moment, when to laugh would be to give the show away.

Up gets the table, round after round of vociferous cheering, and before we know where we are we form part of the ring dancing the "Horo" most vigorously. It is a trying dance, and breathlessly we drop out, whilst these men of iron dance on to a state of frenzy.

"Auld lang syne," right foot on the table and linked

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hands (to the astonishment and delight of the Bulgars—they soon caught the melody), and home to our inn, with promises to meet outside the town in the morning.

The tap of drums, hoarse commands and bugle calls awake us next morning. The square below our windows is full of grey-coated infantrymen, two thousand of them, drawn up in quarter columns of companies. We remember our promise to start an hour or two earlier on our long drive to the railway, see the garrison at drill, and be photographed. The sound of singing is coming down the road, the slow, measured, marching song of the Bulgarian army, and a mountain battery swings up—a few minutes later and the second arrives. Our comrades of last night salute us, and soon the garrison has marched off to await us on the downs outside.

Half an hour later, and our carriage, four horses yoked abreast, is bowling after them. We find the sward a mass of grey, the infantry battalions have piled arms, the artillery have unlimbered. A table covered with a white cloth and spread with every variety of tinned foods, flanked by huge bottles of raki, is placed at the side of the road, and here the Major awaits us with a cheery "Good morning."

The trumpeter sounds "the officers' call," and from all directions troop the officers of the garrison. A group of artillerymen start the "Horo,"a subaltern leading off, and we eat sardines and quaff raki to the jig of the Bulgarian bagpipes. Meanwhile the Major, an ardent amateur photographer, is arranging his picture. A pile of ammunition boxes are our seats, flanked with a couple of mountain guns, and when we are "arranged" the Major solemnly takes us.

Then more breakfast and informal toasts, a few hundred

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burly soldiers forming a respectful but obviously admiring audience, and we go to our carriage.

"Next spring, may we meet again," is our last toast. A rumble of ill-suppressed applause shows that the men have heard and understood. A soldier cries "Macedonia," and a roar of cheering goes up. Hand grips are exchanged, and while with limp arms we enter the carriage, 2,500 men are lining the road. The driver lashes the horses and the Major raises his cap and shouts, "Now!"

Two thousand five hundred deep-chested men respond, and in a state of frenzied intoxication we rise to that magnificent crash of sound. Till the bend of the road hides the scene that roar of farewell cleaves the very skies.

"By Jove! what a grand send-off," I articulate weakly.

"If there is only war next year," piously responds Jimmy.

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GENERAL TSONTCHEFF RECONNOITRING.

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MONTENEGRO

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EVENING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

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An Evening in the Mountains

THE day had been long and tiring. Our ponies hang their heads wearily as we climb a zigzag track through a gloomy beech-forest, and we anathematize our neighbours, the Albanians, whose unruly habits compel us to carry rifle, revolver, and bandoliers in a peaceable country.

The trees are thinning now, and with a sigh of relief we emerge on a great plateau which ends in the mighty Kom, the loftiest peak in Montenegro. Its jagged ridge, like the fangs of wolves, casts fantastic shadows across the deep ravine, and to our right the sun is sinking into a bed of cloud, angry and threatening. The sky above has that wonderful transparent radiance which comes only at eventide, and the lowering clouds are sharply silhouetted with a border of bright gold. All round our high tableland a confusion of mountains reminds us of a storm-tossed ocean. This lofty snow-clad range on our left that towers wall-like into the sky, tinged here and there with patches of crimson sunlight, is Albania's barrier. Only a deep densely wooded ravine separates us from that cruel and murderous people.

That is why the shepherds who are driving flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle to the corrals amongst the cluster of wooded huts carry for the most part rifles. Magazine rifles replace the pastoral staff in Eastern Montenegro. The tinkling of cow-bells is wafted pleasantly across the evening stillness, broken by the shrill whistle of the

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shepherds. From the huts curl little columns of blue smoke, and we can almost smell the stewing lamb which we have ordered for our supper by a forerunner. And there he is, waving his arm to show us our quarters for the night.

At a rudely constructed hut of uneven planks we draw rein. It is the typical summer abode to which the Montenegrin, who then turns shepherd, migrates with his family and flocks for the hottest months.

"May God protect ye!" says our host, a giant of six feet six inches, a splendid specimen of manhood in his prime: lean, lithe, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, clad in close-fitting white serge, bordered in curious patterns with black braid; on his head the universal little black-and-red Montenegrin cap, and at the waist, girdled by a many-coloured sash, sticks the inevitable 18-inch-long revolver.

"May thy luck be good, O Vasso!" we answer, for such is his name, while willing hands hold our stirrup-leathers and take our rifles as we swing off our sturdy ponies.

Stooping, for the door of the hut is not high, we enter into the dense atmosphere. A fire is burning on the hard earthen floor, over which hangs a sooty caldron by a hook and chain from the roof. A comely woman is stirring its contents, but she ceases her work and comes forward with a deep curtsey to kiss our hands.

"Art thou well, Gospodja?" we ask.

"God has given me good health, thanks be to God!"

The stinging smoke drives us outside into the keen mountain air, for there is no chimney. It forces an exit through the cracks and crevices of the roof and sides of the hut, of which there are many, as we shall realize if a cold wind is blowing to-night.

As we stroll along the narrow path trodden through the

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long luxuriant grass we meet a pretty maiden. She is clad in a short skirt and bodice, and on her forehead is perched a coquettish little cap, tied under her chin with a gay scarf; she is carrying a pail of creamy milk. As we approach she draws to one side and faces to the front with downcast eyes and humble mien. We think we see a roguish twinkle in those dark eyes, but we may not greet her. It is not etiquette to notice such inferior beings as girls.

We are barked at by fierce sheep-dogs, luckily securely chained, and saluted by muscular giants, while the children crowd to smoke-reeking doorways to gaze in undisguised wonder at us strange beings. They, at least, have never seen European clothes, neither indeed have many of the men, who ill-conceal their curiosity at our appearance. The Montenegrin, however lowly be his standing, is innately courteous and well bred, to an extent that would shame many a so-called civilized nation.

Later on, after supper, when we unbend round the fire, they will beg leave to handle our clothes, and will ask many questions.

Cap in hand, a boy trots after us. With uncertain voice he tells us that it is an honour to him to bear us the message that our meal is ready and awaiting our pleasure.

We retrace our steps quickly. We have eaten nothing to-day but two eggs at Andrijevica when the morning was still grey, and our mid-day meal was a capful of delicious wild strawberries gathered by our attentive escort.

We half sit, half lie on a pile of rushes over which sheep-skins have been spread, and enjoy a feast of stewed lamb and onions, washed down with draughts of still warm milk. It is a long time before our smarting and watering eyes become accustomed to the penetrating smoke; but it passes,

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and we recline, contented and happy, at peace with the whole world.

"Stefan, the raki," and good Stefan beams as he produces an enormous bottle of native distilled spirits. He has cheerfully carried that extra weight during our long march to-day. We fill our tin mugs to the brim, sip the contents, and pass them to Vasso and his brother.

"Health and long life!" they say to us in turn, and in a gulp the fiery spirit disappears as if it had been water.

Now other men troop in, some standing rifles in the corner, and, gravely saluting us, they squat in a ring round the fire. Coffee is brewed—an honour which we can never escape—and a tobacco-tin is handed to us. We give ours in exchange. Cigarettes are deftly rolled, and one shepherd next us rakes with his fingers a glowing ember from the fire. Handling it as if cold and dead, he lights his cigarette and passes it to us.

We light our cigarettes from his and give it back to him, and we all touch our caps. A light must ever be acknowledged by a half military salute. The bottle is soon half empty, and we lean back lazily contemplating the firelit scene. What a subject for a painter!

The flickering flames, glinting fitfully here and there on steel revolver-barrel, throw out the massive figures of the squatting mountaineers in strong relief, and intensify the gloom beyond. All harsh lines are softened harmoniously, and the rugged but pleasant features of the men, whose serious eyes seldom leave our faces, seem more brown than ever in the ruddy glow.

We talk of many things. We answer questions so childish in their simplicity that we are hard put to explain: they ask us of other lands, of *our* home, where weapons are never

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carried except by soldiers, of houses larger even and more splendid than the Prince's modest palace in Cetinje. Mirko, that grizzled veteran in the farther corner, smoking a grimy tchibouque, a habit he has acquired from fighting the Turks when he was but a youth, never tires of telling how he once saw the Crown Prince's palace just after completion. We dare not tell them all the truth, for then they would gaze at us in pained incredulity.

We suggest a song, and a youth with clear-cut classical features rises obediently at his father's command and goes out into the night. Then a wild, weird chant of battle with the Mussulman rings out in the stilly darkness. Through the open door we can see the stars shining brightly in a cloudless heaven. The wailing notes of the war-song re-echo from the mountains, cows low, and an occasional bark proclaims that the dogs are keenly alert for the prowling wolf and marauding Albanian alike. The song ceases abruptly, and a crackle of pistol shots in the distance signifies that other listeners have heard and appreciated the warlike sentiments.

Sleep weighs down our eyelids. One by one the men leave us with a deep-toned melodious commendation to God's keeping, and we are left alone with our host and his family. We draw our coats and sheepskins o'er us, for the night will be bitterly cold, and to the carefully modulated tones of the men we drowse.

The unweaned calf in the corner moans plaintively, and then we hear no more, and sink into the blessed, dreamless sleep of fatigue.

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A Border Town

IT is midday as our little cavalcade clatters through the main and only street of the mountain village of Andrijevica. To-day its importance as capital of Montenegro's most north-easterly and exposed province is enhanced by the fact that its border is threatened by Albanians.

The great chieftain and persecutor of the Christians, Mullah Zekka, is only four hours away with 20,000 men, eager to be led against their hereditary foes. And the Montenegrins are only too willing to give them every satisfaction in their power.

The street is full of armed men ; officers, only distinguishable by swords and the insignia of rank on the rim of their caps, hurry to and fro. One or two batteries of small wicked-looking mountain guns are drawn up in the open market place.

All is bustle and hurry, while an animation pervades the scene such as is to be witnessed at an annual school treat in far-away peaceful England. War is indeed a recreation to the Montenegrins, and now, after twenty years of formal peace, they can scarcely believe their luck.

We dismount at the inn : it is lucky that we telegraphed to the Governor, else we might have slept in the open that night. Our host, combining the duties of hotel-keeper and baker, superintends the transference of our slender baggage

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IN A BORDER TOWN.

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into our bed-, dining-, and common reception-room combined.

His pretty and refined-looking wife kisses our hands as we enter the room, and asks for our orders as to food. There is no choice except as to the mode of preparing the lamb.

Then we stroll through the town, acknowledging salutes right and left. Five high Turkish officers and a ragged-looking escort pass us, threading their way in single file through the jostling humanity. At the house of Voivoda Lakić they halt and dismount. An angry crowd forms a ring round the house and awaits the reappearance of the Turks.

The order of events is sadly reversed nowadays. Twenty years ago it would have been a delegation of Albanians who would have come to confer with the Montenegrins as to the best means of defying the Turk. To-day Turkish regulars are scheming with the Montenegrin generals to prevent an Albanian invasion.

At Mokra 10,000 Turkish soldiers are under arms, ready to attack Mullah Zekka the moment he violates Montenegrin territory. And this troubles the worthy chieftain, who, if it were not for this unexpected difficulty, would now be burning and ravaging in the valley of the Lim.

A grizzled veteran, whose breast is covered with a row of dingy medals, curses the Turk in an impressive and comprehensive manner. Had he known the legend of the "Walrus and the Carpenter," he would have quoted the words of the outraged moon. It was *not* right of the Turk "to come and spoil the fun."

We pluck his sleeve gently, and he turns on us quickly.

"May God protect thee, Mirko! Dost thou remember us?"

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Both his hands fly out and he kisses us. Does he remember us? Of course he does. That night on the slopes outside the little town of Kolašin, had we not feasted on a lamb roasted whole, and drunk raki, not wisely but enthusiastically? Ah! and at midnight, when the parting toast was drunk standing, with revolvers in hand. What a racket we made as each man emptied his glass and his revolver, to the intense indignation of the local doctor, who was battling with the convivial natives of his district and preaching the blessings of total abstinence to an unappreciative audience. As we trooped back to the market-place, had we not found a hundred armed men assembled, under the impression that the Albanians were raiding the farms? What a wigging the Governor gave us next morning, his eyes twinkling with amusement the while!

Of course Mirko remembered us, and he proclaimed our prowess with loud voice to his hoary comrades. At the han opposite we seat ourselves, and blush at his praise of us as he, divining the object of our visit, tells how the Englishmen love fighting for fighting's sake.

The medals on his breast show that in '58 he fought the Turks; again in '62, when they had penetrated as far as Rijeka, and their outposts stretched to within rifle-shot of Cetinje. Those were evil days for Montenegro; but again in the campaign of '76–'78 the sons of the Black Mountain carried all before them, for ever shattering the dreams of the Turk and vindicating their independence to the world. That medal of pure gold is the Montenegrin Victoria Cross. We touch it and ask—

"How many heads hast thou brought home, O Mirko?"

He shakes his head. That he will never tell, he says;

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he is a *junak* (hero) but no boaster. The number was enough, he adds proudly.

"And wilt thou fight again? Art thou not too old?"

We ask this purposely, and smile as he springs to his feet.

"I am only sixty-two," he answers, and taking his rifle by the muzzle he holds it at arm's length. "Am I weak? May the good God let me die in battle, for I have four sons to take my place if I fall. My one desire is to die when the rifles speak around me, and with the smell of powder and of blood in my nostrils. If we fight now, I will send with ye such men as will lose their heads before they forsake ye. Ye shall see how they fight, and it will be good. But I fear it will be peace," he adds, as the Turks emerge and ride away.

We leave him and his comrades piously and fervently praying to the God of battles, and seek the governor.

As we sit in his room a few minutes later, awaiting the ceremonial coffee, we hear the truth. There will be no fighting, says the Voivoda, the Turks will stop it. Even in his official tones we can detect a tinge of disappointment.

"We are ready," he adds; "but nowadays war is too serious to be lightly undertaken."

And so it came to pass. A week later the troops had vanished and Andrijevica resumed its peaceful aspect. But it will not be for long, and then we hope to journey thither again, perhaps with better luck. It will indeed be a battle of giants, fought under past and gone conditions, when the rifle-fire is only the necessary prelude. It is the handjar and yataghan that decide the day after rifles are thrown away in that headlong rush, and the battlefield becomes a shambles.

Then will the aged Mullah Zekka look down from Paradise and cheer on his trusty clansmen, for he met his

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death in Ipek a few months afterwards at the hands of a rival chieftain. Revolver in hand, he died as befitted the most powerful chieftain of his day, and perhaps since the time of the great Scanderbeg. At a word from him 30,000 clansmen assembled to resist the Sultan or attack the Christians, whoever they might be.

Turks and Montenegrins may well congratulate themselves on his timely removal, though the world has yet to witness the revenge which will surely be taken by his fierce adherents.

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At a Café in Cetinje

I RAISE my fingers towards my cap as I enter the low and dingy coffee-house. The greeting is returned by all present, and finding a vacant chair in a corner by the window I seat myself. No one comes to me for an order ; I can sit there quite quietly, for there is not even a moral compulsion to drink anything. If I desire a coffee, a glass of unpleasant wine, or a tot of raki, I must loudly state my wish to the young man behind the counter.

The assembly is worth studying. At a table in the far corner sits a group of officers in red and black braided waistcoats, over which they wear a short red jacket hussar fashion, with the sleeves hanging empty from their shoulders. One of them I recognize as an adjutant of the Crown Prince, formerly a cavalry officer in the Servian army. There are many such in the service of Montenegro, driven across the border by political discontent. Beside him sits a young giant, only twenty-eight, yet general commanding the artillery. Five years ago his father, whose fame is sung to-day by every strolling *guslar* or troubadour, was shot in a blood-feud in broad daylight before the very café where we are now seated.

As a hero he had lived, and as a hero he died ; for as he lay in his death-agony he drew his revolver, and with his last breath he fired and killed his assailant fifty yards away.

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Near them sit three men in European clothes, but with the Montenegrin cap upon their heads. Two of them are professors at the Gymnasium, the other a teacher of the common school. He is a fine handsome young fellow, his dark complexion suggesting other blood than Montenegrin. He is dressed entirely in black ; even the crown of his cap is of the same sombre hue instead of red. His expressive eyes are sad but determined. It is the face of a man with a purpose, and to whom life has no pleasant prospects. He may well look serious, for on him rests the task of avenging his two brothers and an uncle, who all fell in the vendetta only a few months ago at his home in the valley of the Zeta, shot down without a word of warning in their very houses by an avenging band of Albanians. I remember how the story was told me one evening in pleasant Podgorica, which is only an hour distant from that bloody scene.

And now the last male survivor is sitting in the same coffee-house with me, teaching children the blessings of education and civilization by day, with the grim spectre of Vendetta ever at his elbow. Some day he must don the national garb and, rifle in hand, go forth to the home of his enemies, to kill or die in the attempt to vindicate his family honour.

Strange thoughts of this wonderful people cross my brain as I dreamily sip my coffee, and I can see a man creeping from boulder to boulder in a wild land towards some fields where men, clad in white serge and round whose shaven heads are wound great cloths, are peacefully tilling small oases in the rock-strewn wilderness. He lies behind a stone, cautiously thrusting his rifle before him, and takes long and careful aim. A sharp crack, a little puff of blue smoke, and with a scream one of the husbandmen springs high in the

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AT CETINJE. THE MAIN STREET.

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air, tumbling in an inert mass in a furrow. The others seize their rifles, which lie close at hand, with ear-piercing yells, scattering like rabbits. Again the rifle speaks, and another falls, but answering shouts from the village proclaim that help is coming. The avenger must fly, and fly quickly, if he will save his life. I see him running, bending almost double; but he has been seen, and bullets star the rocks around him. Suddenly he stumbles, recovers himself for a few yards, and then with a deep-drawn sigh he falls forward motionless on his face.

I look at the young school-teacher and shiver.

Four German tourists come in noisily. I saw them arrive an hour ago from Cattaro. I heard them order their carriage to be ready again in three hours.

"Quite enough time to look round the place," said one. "It is a dismal hole, but one must look round to say we've been here."

Now they choose picture postcards and sit down to enrich the Montenegrin post by a few shillings, telling their relations and friends that they have been to Cetinje and don't think much of it.

"Rather a change after the Kaiser Café," says the young man with an aggressive moustache and hard voice, his wonderful green civilian costume proclaiming him to be a Prussian lieutenant.

"Yes," says another, with a contemptuous glance at the barren room. "How absurd to see every man armed when the country is so tranquil!"

"Now that Montenegro is at peace, it were well to spend money on better clothes rather than on senseless pistols carried only for show," remarked a bearded man who looked like a professor. "The poverty and ragged attire of my

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neighbours is appalling, yet each has an expensive revolver."

I looked at the table next to these intelligent students of human nature. It was occupied by half a dozen weather-beaten men, each well over fifty, clad in ragged attire. On their breasts were rows of dingy medals, whose tawdriness again excited the contempt of the Prussian officer.

Yet those medals represented fierce-fought actions against overwhelming forces of disciplined and fanatical foes, stretching over a period of half a century—battles where each warrior was accounted as nought if he did not display at least half a dozen heads as evidence of his prowess when they bivouacked at night on the corpse-strewn battlefield.

Any of those poverty-stricken warriors I should be proud to call a friend, knowing if I did so that wherever I should meet them, and under whatever circumstances, I could reckon them to share with me their last crust, and in danger they would first yield their lives before harm came to me.

The Germans leave, and I watch them on the street standing for a few minutes in bright sunlight. Though by no means small men, they look puny and insignificant beside those herculean figures which stride with measured tread, taking their after-dinner constitutional. With trailing shawl swinging gracefully from their broad shoulders, picturesque raiment of blue, white, and gold, hand on revolver-butt, and fearless look, they make the sons of civilization and big cities seem contemptible beside them.

I am glad when the tourists remove their disturbing presence from that harmonious picture.

An aged man enters the café : he is greeted with marked respect, especially by the ragged veterans at whose table he seats himself.

"May God protect ye!" says the old man, grasping each

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THE MONASTERY AND BISHOP'S PALACE, CETINJE.

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by the hand and kissing them twice on the lips. On his cap he carries the insignia of Voivoda, the highest rank after the Prince. These same men he has led to battle in past days, for he is chief of the Piper clan, and the hero of many a deed of reckless bravery. In Montenegrin warfare the chief leads his men to the assault, and on his recklessness hangs often the issue. He sighs deeply, and I know the reason. Yesterday evening I saw a telegram put in his hands telling him that his only son lay mortally wounded in his mountain home. A bullet of the vendetta had treacherously laid his first-born low. As he read it, the man whose contempt of danger is sung by every *guslar* sat down and wept.

As I pay and go I hear the old chieftain thanking God that there may be hope for his son's life.

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Playfulness

WE have left Scutari, the capital of Albania, behind and the good ship *Danitza* is ploughing her way through the placid waters of the lake towards the Montenegrin shores at the upper end.

It is a perfect day—a little hot, perhaps, in the sun, but the motion of the boat creates a cooling breeze. On our left rises the mighty Rumija, whose jagged peaks divide us from the Adria, and gentle slopes, green and pleasant to the eye, descend by easy gradients to the island-fringed coast along which we are skirting. To the right stretches a broad expanse of sparkling water, and beyond lie the snow-clad Albanian Alps, here and there wreathed with a milky-white cloud towering into the otherwise cloudless sky.

The little steamer—which is very cosmopolitan in itself, for a metal plate proclaims that it was built in England, is owned by a Scottish firm, flies the Montenegrin flag, and is captained by an Austrian—has a full complement of third-class passengers. They are very noisy too, which is irritating, for I feel sleepy, and would like to doze in the shade of the awning. There is something very soothing about the swish of water on a hot day; but to-day I can hear nothing but the loud and excited conversation of the Albanians abaft the engines. They are a wild-looking lot, all armed, and of the Christian faith, as the attention they pay

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to enormous bottles of strong drink proclaims. One of them starts a weird war-chant, and the rest join in a stormy chorus.

"It is too early," I murmur to myself. "If it were ten o'clock at night instead of ten in the morning, I might excuse a little conviviality; but in the broad daylight it is sacrilege."

An hour passes; and I must have dozed, for the steward taps me gently on the shoulder. He informs me in shocking Italian that the mid-day meal is ready.

The Albanians have got much worse I notice, as I execute an acrobatic feat necessary on entering the tiny cabin. I bump my head, which causes me to swear; bump into the table, which makes me repeat what I said before; and then I bow to the other occupants of the table. There are two besides the captain, who is an old friend; one is the consul of a great Power much interested in the Albanian question, and the other a brown-habited Franciscan friar.

The consul is a small grey-haired and bearded man of insignificant stature, and his restless fingers proclaim him to be of an excitable temperament: probably the noisy Albanians have got on his nerves. The Franciscan contrasts oddly with him in all respects—big, placid and young. His moustache looks out of place; but I know all Roman Catholic priests grow moustaches in these regions, where a beardless man excites derision. He is as talkative, too, as the other is silent, and we speedily enter into conversation. In broad Styrian dialect he tells me of the excitement in Scutari, and how a few days ago the spiritual shepherd of a fierce clan, inhabiting part of those wild mountains to our right, arrived in Scutari a fugitive from his flock. We discuss the probable revenge which another clan will take

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for the burning of one of their churches by Turkish soldiery. He remarks on the unnatural calm displayed by the Albanian Christians in Scutari at the present moment.

"It bodes ill for the Mahometans," he says. "I never trust the mountaineers when they are so quiet after an outrage."

A wild burst of yelling almost drowns his deep-toned voice.

"Your children exhibit no such unnatural calm here, father," I remark. "They are a few degrees worse than a crowd returning from a race-meeting in England—and more I cannot say."

The consul moved restlessly on his chair.

"They are all drunk," exclaimed the captain, "and excited about that church."

"That is obvious," I answer. "It is lucky we aren't Turks."

The friar comments on the abnormal state of affairs in the whole of Northern Albania, which I corroborate, contributing to his ghastly stories of murders and mutilations a few gleaned from other sources.

The consul does not agree with us. "It is like this every spring," he says coldly. "You newspaper-men magnify these small troubles into affairs of international importance."

"I should like to see the reports *you* send to your Government," I retort. "That the Porte always seeks to minimize a big massacre into a merely local affection we all know."

A shot rings out above us—the consul nearly jumps from his chair—then another and another.

"I thought that would come soon. In fact I wonder they haven't begun shooting before," I remark.

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THE LAKE OF SCUTARI.

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"I protest against this!" exclaims the consul excitedly to the captain, who is lighting a cigarette. "It must not be allowed on this steamer!"

"It is nothing," answers the captain, quietly puffing rings of smoke and watching them vanish through the skylight. "The noise eases their feelings."

"I call on you as captain of the boat to stop the firing!" continued the consul angrily, as another volley rings out; "otherwise I shall report you. There is a rule forbidding it," and he points to a printed list of regulations.

The captain sighs, finishes his glass, and calls to the steward to bring him his revolver. Then he climbs up the hatchway to the deck. I follow him, and listen admiringly as he sharply orders the revellers to cease, in a torrent of Turkish, Albanian, and Serb oaths. The Franciscan retires hastily to the cabin again, as he too hears the captain's comprehensive blasphemy.

"Who shall give us orders to stop?" shouts a truculent ruffian, brandishing a huge revolver.

"And who shall make us?" adds another cut-throat with bloodshot eyes, pushing through the group and firing deliberately over the captain's head.

I notice the under lip of the captain tremble, and his face changes expression. It means he is really angry.

"I will," he says simply. "It is against the orders, and you will stop."

Hoarse laughter accompanies him as he turns to go down the companion, and for ten minutes there is no firing. Then a tornado of shots breaks out again, and the captain flies up on deck revolver in hand. He is too quick for me, but I hear him from below.

"I will shoot the next man who fires, and take the steamer

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back to Scutari. There I will hand the whole lot over to the authorities—those that are alive," he adds significantly.

I dare not breathe. Such consummate effrontery from the captain, one man against a score of reckless dare-devils who care nothing for human life, all inflamed with drink, petrifies me. The impudence of this laughable threat was stupendous.

As I emerge on deck, I see them replace their smoking revolvers in their belts and go off laughing.

I congratulate the captain. He is trembling violently.

"It is all that —— consul. Why shouldn't they shoot if it amuses them?" he says. "Steward!" he roars; "bring me up a bottle of wine on deck and two glasses."

He continues cursing until we cast anchor at Plavnica, and an unwieldy barge puts out of the Marshes and removes our lively passengers. They salute us respectfully as they go.

"Fancy making a row with a lot of boisterous children like them!" remarks the captain. "Bah!" he says, and spits expressively towards the cabin.

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A Walk in the Mountains

IT is not good to walk in Montenegro, that is to say, for long distances, either for reasons of economy or for one's health. Rather accord with the horse-owner, however exorbitant may appear the terms, or spend a few hours more on the journey and go the roundabout way by road.

Such advice I mentally swear to give any unsuspecting foreigner should I ever reach Virpazar alive. I look at my watch and find it is ten o'clock. By this time they assured me last night in Cetinje that I should be eating a sumptuous breakfast at Vir, if I got off by five a.m. I had started before five, in a steady drizzle, accompanied by a guide who had driven me to distraction the night before. We had spoken of terms; and I had offered one gulden fifty kreutzers. For a five hours' walk this was liberal payment, but he had demanded twice the amount. I remained seemingly firm, meaning to go eventually as far as two guldens. He gazed at me reproachfully, and then said he was not sure of waking at four o'clock—could he sleep in my house? I suggested it to Reinwein, my worthy landlord, who became abusive and put my feelings into strong but picturesque language. A Montenegrin not able to rise at four o'clock! It was too absurd. I offered with much sarcasm my alarum clock; but the jest fell flat, as he had never heard of one. Then he reverted to the question of payment, and narrated at length the expenses he would incur by travelling with me

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to Vir. There was his bed to pay for that night, food for the next day, and damages to shoe-leather, until I began to wonder at this strange man and the workings of his intricate brain. Again I used sarcasm, and inquired if I should pay his rent at home for the coming quarter as well. It struck him as a good idea, and his countenance brightened. Then it was that I lost all patience and demanded back the fifty kreutzers hand money I had given him, saying I would find the way alone.

"That thou canst not do, Gospodin. Give me one gulden sixty kreutzers and I will be with thee at half-past four to-morrow. Dost thou agree?"

Such was the way this intelligent man schemed to get an extra five farthings out of me. I had lost half an hour and my temper.

As the clock of the old monastery chimed out five we had already climbed out of the valley of Cetinje. Two hours later we halted at a primitive han (Montenegrins use the word *han* instead of the more universally known word "khan") for coffee, with an egg beaten up into a fine cream as a substitute for milk.

"How far from here?" I asked on leaving.

"Three hours for thee, two for a Montenegrin," was the answer, and it had irritated me; so, in a blinding snow storm (on the 1st of May), I did my best to make the pace. I wonder to-day that I did not break my neck down that awful path into the valley below. It was a hillside to be negotiated with care and at leisure, not to be skipped down as if one was hurrying down an ordinary flight of stairs. My guide leapt blithely from one jagged point to another, as sure-footed as a mountain goat, waiting for me every hundred yards with an apologetic look as I stumbled and

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slid after him. Not only are these paths used by human beings and goats, but also by mountain torrents in wet weather.

And now it was ten o'clock. Vir was nowhere in sight, and a feeling of great wrath arose within me as I contemplated the sole of one of my boots flapping idly in the wind. Both heels looked as if they had been chopped at with an axe, and my feet felt as if they had been inside during the operation. Thoughts of missing the diligence from Vir to Antivari assail me. It goes only every other day, and if I find it gone, that means another weary climb on foot over the Sutormann Pass, down to the coast beyond, for I wish to catch the weekly steamer to Cattaro. It does not do to miss connexions in out-of-the-way places like Vir.

We push on and meet a youth. We greet each other fervently.

"It is three-quarters of an hour away," he answers. "May God go with you!"

I am tempted to whistle a merry tune, for I can last another hour, and so can my boots. It was too soon to whistle, and it made my guide whistle too—it is funny how catching whistling is—which set my teeth on edge. Montenegrins have no idea of tune, and confine themselves to a compass of four or five half tones. It is distracting to a point of madness after ten minutes.

Eleven o'clock, and we are still bounding along a seesaw path, and have crossed and recrossed the swollen river a dozen times with a skill which Blondin would have admired. I am now indifferent to personal danger. What matter if I miss my footing on the rocks jutting out of the foaming stream or stumble on the precipice above, death will be equally quick. And the diligence leaves at twelve.

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The scenery was probably magnificent, now and then I catch glimpses of it, great hills towering above me on either side; but my feet are far too tender to permit my eyes to wander above me. I begin to talk to myself aloud, in English, so as not to shock my simple guide. Eleven-thirty, and I tap my revolver with a murderous longing to kill all the people who said the journey could be accomplished with ease in five hours. They had given me to understand that to do it in six hours we should have to dawdle by the way, to pick flowers and smoke cigarettes at the more beautiful spots. On a macadamised road and dead level it might be done in five hours, but then a Montenegrin scorns a well-made road. He infinitely prefers to skip like a young ram in the hills, a simile which whiles away another ten minutes, as it does not seem quite right. The steeper the path and the more strewn with rock and boulders, the faster he goes on his way rejoicing.

It is twelve, and now I am apathetic. I do not call aloud to myself any longer, to the mystification of my guide, who always thought I was trying to keep up a conversation with him. I am oblivious of the nails running into my heels, and I do not place my feet with the care I did when a year ago I left Cetinje one cold and dismal morning full of hope and pride in my youthful vigour. The most casual observer will notice, too, that my step has lost its wonted elasticity, and that a lethargy has come upon me, making my movements mechanical. I muster up a little energy to address my guide.

"Go, thou liar and son of liar. Hurry forward to the town, and if by any chance the post is still there, stand by the driver with thy revolver till I come."

He springs forward—I had hoped he would kill me for

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VILLAGE INFANTS.

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the insult—and I am left to plod wearily after him. At last I see the little cluster of houses of Vir. At twelve-thirty I stagger into the market-place.

"The diligence is still there," says my guide, who has run lightly towards me. I breathe a prayer of thankfulness and of repentance for the remarks I have made, which might have blighted the very trees.

"But it is full," he adds as an after-thought.

I do not faint, I do not even swear—dumbly I walk to the inn. A man I know from former visits, the village jack-of-all-trades, follows me.

"Cut them off," I say as he proceeds to unlace what were a few hours ago a pair of strong boots, ironically called in other lands shooting-boots, suitable for mountaineering and long walking tours. "Thou mayst keep them and the other things too." These were once a pair of socks.

Then a fair maiden comes in with a tub of warm water and insists on tenderly bathing my poor feet. At any other time I should have indignantly refused her kindly ministrations.

"Thy feet are very beautiful," she says as she dries them on a soft towel; "but they are not fitted for our stony paths. Thou hast never walked barefooted."

"Indeed," I answered mechanically. "I thought I had to-day."

Then cramp in various parts of my body precludes further intelligent conversation, and I am discreetly left alone with my thoughts.

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The Prisoners

VIRPARZAR always gives me the impression of being cut off from the rest of the world utterly and completely. Yet it is richly endowed with some of Nature's choicest gifts in the way of scenery, and for fear of having been too liberal in this respect she has added fever. It lies up a long estuary of the Lake of Scutari in the form of a ring of more or less dilapidated houses, facing an open market-place and surrounded by extensive swamps. Beyond the swamps lovely green hills rise in glorious confusion, and the peep of the lake is exquisite, with the twin-peaked island of Vranjina and the embattled fortress isle of Lesandria, whilom prison and now a jealously guarded arsenal. Across the stretch of shimmering water, its fringing marshes teeming with pelican, crane and duck, tower the snow-clad Albanian Alps, while behind the tiny village stretches the fertile valley of the Crmnica, slowly rising, enclosed in walls of richly wooded hills to the lofty Sutormann Pass and the blue summit of the Rumija, beyond which lies the Adria. The spot is idyllic, yet accursed because of the aforementioned fever, and I am doomed to spend twenty-four hours in it, waiting while they find a mule to carry me over the Sutormann to-morrow. The tiny *Danitza*, Montenegro's sole representative on the waters in the shape of steamships, is whistling mournfully up the estuary on one of its bi-weekly visits. From the door of the wretched little hove

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I watch the handful of passengers land from an ungainly barge. They are nearly all baggy-breeched Scutarines, the commercial princes of these regions, but amongst them I notice a European. I watch him with curiosity, for I know him not. He is obviously not a tourist, neither is he travelling for his pleasure, as the look of disgust on his face proclaims. Also he is inquiring for the diligence, and then a feeling of wicked joy comes over me that another mortal has been victimized like myself, for now he is a fast prisoner till the day after to-morrow, unless he intends to be tortured for many hours on a Turkish saddle. He passes me on the way to the only inn, with its one bedroom, muttering strange oaths in Italian, and again I rejoice, for I shall be no more alone. And within ten minutes he returns, evidently seeking for me, and I rise up and go towards him.

"I have heard you were here," he says; giving me his hand.

Of course, I answer, and we introduce ourselves.

He is the new veterinary doctor of Montenegro, an Italian. We seat ourselves in the hovel, which is coffee-house, wine-shop, and shoemaker's workshop combined, and the smiling young Turk, native of Scutari, prepares us coffee. A faded photograph attracts my attention on the wall, and I take it down. It is the likeness of a Turkish officer, and at his side stand two Sudanese, and the place of its origin is Suakim.

"It is my father," says the young Turk with conscious pride. "He was killed many years ago in Africa."

I turn the portrait over and the inscription in writing on the back sets forth that he was the captain of an Albanian company of soldiers in the army of one "Beker Pacha," in the early eighties. I read the inscription aloud, it is in French, and then I recognise that "Beker" was the

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ill-fated Baker, one of the heroes of my childhood. Verily the world is very small.

The vet and I talk of the country, which he does not know yet as well as I do, of mutual acquaintances, and of towns and cities we know in the world outside. I recount in his sympathetic ear the story of my walk from Cetinje hither and he tells me of a similar experience in the mountains around the wonderful monastery of Ostrog, perched up on the face of a beetling cliff.

"They told me there that my destination was but a quarter of an hour away, and not knowing in those days the Montenegrin idea of time, I left my horse to proceed on foot. In half an hour I reached a village, and learnt that I had still another quarter of an hour, and so I plodded on. Three hours later I arrived and had to sleep the night in a hut, half house and half cattle shed.

"I know," I answered with feeling, staggering painfully to my feet. "Look at the wreck I am from a five hours' stroll!"

"I will treat you," he says kindly. Massage and a little rubbing in with spirits will put you right. You should always carry embrocation with you in case of such eventualities."

"There will be no need in the future," I reply. "My walking days in Montenegro are over. Please treat me, though, as 'Arzt' and not as 'Thier' (vet), for I am very tender."

And I smile wanly as I straighten my knees and pause a moment for the cramp to pass.

By the evening we have exhausted every topic of conversation but one, and that is religion. My friend is an Atheist: he says he cannot help it, living in a land like this so full of religious superstition.

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A SHEPHERD'S HUT ON THE BRDA.

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We are sitting in the only bedroom, with closely shuttered windows to keep out the fever mists, while the chorus of croaking frogs from the swamps below forces us to raise our voices.

"But of all religions I hate that of the Turks the most," he says with unnecessary vehemence.

"Go on," I say, for I scent a story.

"You know the spot where the paths divide for Kolašin and Andrijevica?"

Do I not? It is one of the most gloriously romantic spots in Montenegro, where the river Tara dashes over its boulder-strewn course towards the Danube, for it is across the watershed of the Adria and the Black Sea. Gloomy pine forests and enormous beech woods bedeck the surrounding hills, covering with delicious shade the bridle-path which meanders beside the foaming torrent. Clefts in the imprisoning hills disclose glimpses of snow-topped mountains, and all is so wildly desolate yet so entrancingly beautiful, that I sigh with longing when I think of the glories of the Brda, the Alpine land of North Eastern Montenegro.

"I had my servant Lazo with me, whom you know," went on the doctor, "and it was evening as we drew rein before the little han, where he wished to spend the night. Two villainous Turks were cooking a meal over the fire in a cauldron, and as we stretched our limbs outside, a Montenegrin from the Vassović arrived, tired and footsore. He entered the hut and drew from his pocket a piece of meat, and without more ado he laid it upon the embers to grill. Scarcely had he done so when one of the Turks sniffed, and demanded of the newcomer what he was cooking.

"'A piece of meat,' he said quietly. 'I am tired, for

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I have journeyed since daybreak and have eaten nothing.'

"'What meat?' asked the Turk excitedly.

"'Pig,' answered the Montenegrin.

"I verily believe," continued the vet, "that they would have killed him. Both Turks turned on the unlucky Montenegrin as if possessed with devils, and I, hastily turning to Lazo, asked if he was with me. He nodded—he loves a row, you remember, and drawing our revolvers we entered the hut.

"'Another syllable and you are dead men,' I said, 'or we will take ye before our revolvers to Cetinje, and have ye punished.' For both men had drawn their revolvers on the bewildered Montenegrin, which alone is a crime. The Turks stammered in their fright that pig's meat was an abomination in their eyes, that they were true Mussulmans and so on.

"'Ye are the strangers in this land, which is the home of the man ye have threatened. By what right can ye introduce your senseless superstitions here?'

"And we bundled them outside, cooking pots and all. I have no patience with nonsense of this sort." He leant back puffing his cigarette angrily.

"You will get yourself into trouble one day," I say sleepily, "if you go about preaching your views on religion in this manner; and now if you wouldn't mind operating on me I should be obliged. Sleep is weighing heavily upon me."

And for the next few minutes human cries mingled with the deafening croaking of the frogs outside. The vet was an exceedingly strong man, and evidently accustomed to horses.

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Morning on the Lake of Scutari

"WHAT'S the time?" I ask mechanically as a noise like thunder followed by an earthquake arouses me from my slumbers. I open my eyes, and a slanting beam of sunlight illumines the room, utterly empty except for a mattress upon the floor, and a collection of guns, carbines, and cartridge belts in one corner. My trusty Stefan releases the corner of the mattress—explaining the seeming earthquake, and stands over me relentlessly.

"All right, Stefan," I murmur. "Go away. I'll be down in a moment."

But he moves not, and his features assume an apologetic grimness.

"Thou gavest certain orders yesterday, Gospodin," he says, "and below the boatmen wait this past half-hour. Thou wast very enraged yesterday because we started an hour too late."

Ah, yesterday I remember I just turned over and closed my eyes again for a few moments, which Stefan afterwards magnified into an hour.

"Give me my things then," I demand of Stefan; and in a few minutes I appear below in the lightest garb compatible with decency, for the heat of the Lake of Scutari rivals that of the tropics. Stefan approaches me with a ladle of water, pouring it into my hollowed hands, and I just succeed

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in damping my face. Wash-stands, basins, towels, and such like luxuries are not to be had in the unbeaten tracks of Montenegro, and even in some of the larger towns the zealously cleanly must perforce content themselves with the backyard and a pail.

By a steep track we wend our way down to the waters, and a moist warmth ascends to meet us even at this early hour. An old man who has promptly annexed my gun suggests a staid and impressive harlequin. He is clothed literally in shreds and patches, even as the "wandering minstrel;" practically nothing of the original cloth remains. He is carrying the gun tenderly, as a mother would her infant, while in advance trots a mischievous-looking boy, to prepare the canoe. Stefan, ex-Hungarian sergeant, mutineer, and deserter, shoulders my carbine, and marches as if he were again leading his section into action against the Bosnians. At a roughly constructed pier of stones is tied a flat-bottomed canoe, and in it we take our places—the boy in the bows rowing, while in the stern sits the old man looking ahead. These two propel the boat swiftly forward with much dexterity, and Stefan and I have practically the whole canoe to ourselves. Down a wide channel we go, between the high and precipitous banks of the island of Vranjina and a submerged forest of willows, keeping a wary eye upon the deep blue sky above, lest a crane should sweep o'er us within range. Several baots pass us, full of mahogany-coloured fishermen proceeding towards the shimmering expanse of the great lake which we are leaving behind.

"May God be with ye," they half chant, pausing in their long strokes as we go by to gaze at the strange spectacle of a foreigner in their midst.

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"Look," shouts one with a mighty voice, as a graceful crane skims towards us, low down, but at the well meant hint the bird swerves and turns aside, while his companions, more versed in hunting, rend him with scathing irony. As we leave the island's shelter, large fields of water stretch out before us, hedged with long grass, and here and there a solitary willow. The surface is dotted with duck, and far away a group of pelicans are gravely fishing. We strike across these fields, so shallow that our canoe sticks occasionally, and nimbly our paddlers jump overboard and shove us clear, on towards the thickets of willows beyond. Deeper channels traverse these submerged fields, and along them we turn and twist, through a belt of willows, where paddles are useless, and we pull and push ourselves along by the branches. Suddenly the boy throws himself flat in the boat: a few yards before us sits a crane in the branches of a stunted willow. He sees us, and with an ungainly spring he seeks to escape, but it is too late. He crashes through the twigs with a dull thud into the water. The report startles hundreds of water fowl into activity, and high above us a great pelican circles majestically, perplexed, yet inquisitive.

Stefan takes the carbine with a mute request, and aims at the bird. I shrug my shoulders. It is an absurd feat to attempt, but I am curious, for often has Stefan boasted of shooting eagles on the wing with a rifle. The carbine rings out with a sharp and unpleasant crack. The pelican swerves violently but continues his wild circling, for we are hidden in the dense undergrowth. The magazine clicks as Stefan ejects and reloads.

"Thou fool," I remark, "thou art only wasting cartridges."

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As an answer the carbine cracks, and a bunch of white feathers breaks from the pelican. Still he continues his mad circling, and wonderingly I await the next shot. Bang! Our paddlers shout ecstatically as the enormous bird collapses and falls in a helpless mass into the bushes a few hundred yards away. Stefan puts the carbine aside with a smirk of self-satisfaction, and we proceed feverishly to hunt for the bird. We find it, and Stefan generously lays it at my feet.

And now we are nearing our destination, a willow island so densely wooded that even a man wading up to his middle can scarce pentrate its centre. With great cunning a colony of white crane have built themselves a home within its branches, and we can see a few as they sail to and fro above us, their snowy plumage gleaming in the strong sunshine.

One flies close overhead and I fire. It falls, and the next moment the air hums with the whirr of a thousand wings. In wild excitement the beautiful fowl rise high, some circling, others flying away, and hurriedly we seek shelter under the outer branches. For several minutes they fly so thickly over our heads that it is hard to aim until the momentary excitement passes, and we recover our mental equilibrium. Then the birds become more wary, and we gain a little more breathing time. Our paddlers, ever watchful, acclaim each successful shot, enthusiastically wade into the thicket to fetch our dead or wounded birds, and murmur sympathetically when we miss. Our guns are hot, the sun is burning fiercely, and the birds get scarcer: not even a rifle shot fired at random into the thickest raises more than one or two stragglers. The rest have departed till sunset, or are crouching in their nests; for they are no

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fools after the first shock is over. Were we real feather-hunters—for it is from these birds we get those beautiful aigrettes—we would wade in and slaughter the unlucky birds in their nests, as has been done in most parts of Europe, to the almost utter extermination of the species. The boy begs for my gun and for permission to stalk a few in this manner, but I refuse, and we begin our homeward paddle. Whew! it *is* hot. My head is beginning to split from the concussion of the gun, coupled with the heat. Inwardly I pray that there may be nothing more to shoot this morning. But we sight some duck, and Stefan insists, urging a depleted larder, but they dive as we approach. With great cunning our helmsman turns the boat and paddles furiously, signing to me to be ready to fire at a certain spot. Up come their little heads twenty yards away from our bows and, setting my teeth, I fire. My head seems to split in two, but one duck remains floating helplessly.

"One more," says Stefan.

"It is enough," I answer, laying aside my gun.

"For thee, yes," remarks Stefan, fishing out the duck, and again we are paddling furiously in a curving sweep. "I and the pŏp[1] would like a duck too," he adds.

I give him the gun, ignoring the allusion to my appetite, and stuff my fingers ignominiously into my ears. Bang, bang, right and left, and two ducks, one dead, and the other flapping helplessly are left.

"Home," I say as we capture the duck, and an hour later I am lying on my back in the shade, wondering if the sport of the morning was worth such a sick headache. Shooting under such conditions is not good enough, and I swear to give it up. For a few birds, in such a blazing sun——

[1] Pŏp is a priest of the Orthodox Church.

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"At what time shall the boat be ready this afternoon?" asks Stefan, approaching me with a half-plucked duck.

"At four o'clock as usual, ass. And now let me sleep this off."

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Evening on the Lake of Scutari

THE heat of the day has passed. With my head upon a pillow of coats I lie at full length on the bottom of the canoe, lazily listening to the swish of the water as my paddlers slowly wind in and out of a narrow channel. A dreamy peace pervades the scene, which very strongly resembles a deserted backwater of the Thames. The stillness is unbroken save by an occasional far-away hail of fishermen, or the grating croak of a grey heron in the bushes. Up in the bows, out of reach of temptation, lies my gun.

Knowing my queer tastes, the ancient mariner at the stern turns sharply inwards, and in a few seconds we are floating in a vast inundated forest. Gnarled and twisted trunks and fantastic branches surround us, and bow takes in his paddle, swinging us along cleverly with his hands. It is a quaint sight, this submerged woodland glade. It seems unreal and fairy-like. A leafy canopy shuts out the heavens, and all is shrouded in a gloomy mysterious light.

Ever nearer comes a chorus of hoarse unmusical croaking as we approach a colony of grey heron. We come so noiselessly that the birds do not perceive us, and under their round, flat-bottomed nests we gaze unnoticed at the ungainly occupants. Their long necks, lanky legs, and unpleasantly grating voices are hard to reconcile with the graceful bird skimming with steady rhythm, neck drawn and legs trailing behind, across the wide blue heavens.

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Unlike their white brethren the crane, they build their colonies in the most accessible places, knowing that neither their flesh nor feathers are valuable. The air is full of the whirr of wings as the parent birds soar homewards, circling above the tree-tops before finally returning to the bosom of their families. We pass on, and now the forest thins as we near the open water once more. Another vigorous push and we are out upon the great lake. Not a breath of wind disturbs its glassy surface, which sparkles refreshingly in the setting sun.

The helmsman looks at me interrogatively and I nod. It is getting late, and there are those duck for supper. We round the apex of the forest, and there is the tiny chapel and living house of the Monastery of Vranjina, my temporary home. How pretty it looks, perched half-way up the steeply sloping hillside! There is a pleasant feeling of substantiality about the grey stone buildings, the rocky hill, and the sturdy green trees after the watery islands and swamps of the lake.

Some fishermen preparing to camp on the island hail us as we would pass, wishing us a good evening. One man comes down to the water's edge and beckons to me.

"What wouldst thou, Mirko?" I call, for he is well known to me.

"Wilt thou not share our supper, Gospodin?" he answers. "We have caught some splendid fish."

It is a beautiful picture. Groups of men are busily engaged in preparing the frugal meal; some are fetching wood and lighting small fires, while others are cleaning the fish or mending nets. They are all fine big men, brown as berries and clad in the tattered red-and-blue national costume. One group sings a wailing ditty, and the long-drawn-out

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THE POP AND HIS CLASS.

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tones go pealing over the lake, while behind them the hillside rises steeply into the clear evening air.

I take my gun and land, for the scene pleases me—it is also really nearer to the monastery. Mirko gravely shakes my hand and learns with evident disappointment that I cannot eat with him. He reminds me how often he has accepted my hospitality, and yet I always refuse his. I comfort him with assurances that I will certainly visit him in his home, though mentally I pray that I may be spared this ordeal. Invitations to the houses of enthusiastically friendly peasants are not to be lightly accepted, unless one is possessed of the digestive powers of an ostrich and the capacity of a Falstaff. But my friend does not let me go without further mark of his favour. He selects the largest fish and ceremoniously presents it to me, while others draw near with an enormous black bottle.

"To prevent fever," says one. "For the appetite," says another tempter, pouring out a small tumbler of spirits. "Long life and health!" he continues, giving it to me, and hastily I swallow it. Then we all shake hands, and I wish them a good night in God's keeping, and to their melodious and pious answers I take my leave. The singing follows me up my rocky path towards the monastery.

I find the good priest before the chapel on the little plateau that commands such a grand view of the lake. He is clad in the national garb, his holy profession proclaimed only by his long hair and beard and tiny black cap. His face is grave and tender, and he smiles as he sees me, wishing me "Bon soir." The good man is very proud of his French, though his vocabulary does not consist of more than a dozen words. I disappear round a projecting rock, and as I approach him from behind noiselessly, over the rich

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carpet of grass, I see that he has my carbine and is taking aim at various objects in the lake. Thus have I often surprised him, for he has all the Montenegrin love of firearms, and will while away hours firing imaginary shots. This evening I have a magazine in my pocket. I slip it into the carbine.

"At what shall we shoot?" I ask. He shakes his head as I smilingly offer him the carbine. He will not shoot himself in reality, but I delight in tempting him.

"At that stump at the end of the willows. Or is it too far for thee? It must be five hundred yards."

I nod approvingly, for Montenegrins are wonderful judges of distance, and adjusting the sight I seat myself beside him.

"Take a fine sight," he murmurs in my ear. "It is less than five hundred."

The rifle cracks and a jet of water spurts beside the stump.

"A good shot," he nods. "Thou canst shoot like a Montenegrin."

It is the greatest compliment that he can pay, and he says it every time I shoot well. Silently I place the weapon in his hands, ready for the next shot. Mechanically he takes aim and—bang—again that tiny column of water spurts up, but not so near the stump as mine. The worthy priest rubs his shoulder and looks at me reproachfully.

"I forgot that it was loaded," he says; but his features relax as he meets my laughing face. I reload for him, and he takes it again, this time with a deprecatory shrug of his shoulders.

"Ah, but the Gospodin Pōp has not forgotten," says a voice behind us. It was a splendid shot, and an old man, house-servant and sacristan, who has approached us from the chapel, rubs his hands gleefully, challenging me with his

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eyes to do better if I can. The priest's tan darkens into what would be a blush in a fair-skinned man, and he gives me back the carbine with the air of a man putting sin behind him. Then he rises with a murmured apology and departs with his aged factotum, leaving me alone with the grandeur of the evening view. The Albanian Alps are bathed in a pink light, standing out so clearly that they seem almost within rifle-shot. Yet miles of glassy lake and vast swamp separate us. Above the willow islands at my feet a few belated crane are circling, their white plumage showing up vividly against the deep green of the trees. The sun is sinking rapidly behind the rugged Rumija, whose edges are silhouetted into almost painful sharpness in the crimson glow.

The singing of the fishermen in the distance would seem if anything rather to heighten the feeling of loneliness and utter stillness, and a sweet peace steals over me. Harshly the voice of Stefan calls me back to earth and to supper. Regretfully I enter the refectory and take my seat beside the priest, who is eyeing hungrily the roast duck before him. I know he is blessing me—firstly for breaking his solitude, and secondly for insisting on meals of meat every day, of which he in courtesy is bound to partake.

"'Tis better than goats' cheese and maize bread," I say with a profane wink at the hermit. The answer is indistinct, as from one whose mouth is full; but he gratefully fills my glass with wine such as is not to be had for love or money in the whole country-side.

"Thanks," I say.

"To God the thanks," he answers reprovingly.

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Ostrog : The Arrival

THE heavy post-diligence rolls away towards Nikšić with a merry farewell from the bluff driver and many pious commendations to St. Vasili from the occupants of the coach. The 'five hours' drive from Podgorica had been an eventful one even for Montenegro. Firstly, we had driven through a terrible thunder-storm, which had made the much-coveted box-seat rather a disadvantage than otherwise. In spite of umbrellas kindly handed out of the window by fair Montenegrins, the partial use of the driver's oilskins, and my own so-called waterproof coat, the rain was not to be denied. An old gentleman inside, with his wife and two pretty daughters, had been quite distressed, and invited me fervently and oft to squeeze in with them, a request which received much mute support from the maidens, who blushed sweetly as their father pointed to the limited space between them. But I was thoroughly wet, and I nobly refused the temptation.

Then I had lost my servant Stefan, who had preceded me on horseback, and had evidently only too willingly sought the shelter of a wayside han. Knowing him from former experiences, I resigned myself to the loss of his services for the best part of the day.

In the little town of Danilovgrad we had halted for half an hour while the horses were changed. My friend the

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doctor from Podgorica had charged into me, buried in a huge umbrella, as, by an acrobatic feat of balancing, I attempted to run the water out of one of my top-boots. When he saw who it was he apologized, explaining that for two nights he had had no sleep. Two evenings ago he had been ruthlessly torn from our midst by a telegram informing him that a man had been wounded by an axe in this town, and he had hurried off on horseback to his help. I conjectured that this man had kept the doctor up two nights.

"Oh, *he* is bandaged up and doing well," said the doctor; "but last night a man has been shot. His enemy met him on the street and promptly put a bullet through his stomach. He is on the point of death, though I have done what I could for him." At that moment the commandant came up with a crowd of armed men, for the dying man's friends were excited.

"The place is in a state of revolution," said the doctor, hurrying off, and a moment later the driver of the Montenegrin post called to me. As we drove out of the town I saw the doctor entering a small house surrounded by a group of earnest men. From an upper window an old man with a white strained face looked down on the rain-swept road, and on his shoulders wept a young woman. I saw her shoulders heaving convulsively, and I shuddered as I glanced at the next window with its drawn curtains. Then the storm broke out afresh, lightning cleft the mist-laden air, and the thunder roared in short sharp cracks like the firing of heavy guns. Ever higher wound our road as we climbed the side of the valley, and as a bad dream of the night the storm rolled away behind us. The heights of Ostrog loomed out of the mist far away on the opposite side of the broad valley, and the sun shone on the white tents and buildings

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of the monastery, whither I was journeying. We passed a flock of sheep peacefully grazing on our left in a sheltered hollow, watched by a huge white dog. A hurried exclamation by the driver made me jump, and he pulled up the vehicle short, pointing with the whip at a huge eagle swooping down. Breathlessly we watched that fatal swoop, I muttering futile regrets that my gun had been left behind. A howl of pain and the eagle was beating up again with his prey. We could hear the swish of his mighty wings, when suddenly his victim writhed in that grip of iron and *bit* him in the throat. Then we saw the eagle release his hold, and the animal fell heavily to the ground. For once the eagle's eye had failed him, and he had captured a Tartar in the form of the dog, which, evidently badly hurt by the talons and by the fall, lay yelping in his pain. The driver would not stop that I might descend to look at the plucky beast, and we were off again to the running fire of oaths and much whip-cracking with which he urged on his four horses.

"O asses, and offspring of asses, why do ye no work? Dost thou think, O Alat, that thy brethren shall pull and thou do nothing? O asses, accursed beasts, that make my life a burden!" And the whip cracks on the back of any that relaxes for a second the tension on the traces. With a running fire of such comments, interspersed by ejaculatory efforts at conversation with me and frequent dips into my tobacco-tin, he has beguiled the weary hours since five that morning.

"O asses," I hear him cry again as he leaves me on the newly completed road to Ostrog; for last year it was indeed a pilgrimage undertaken with much groaning and vexation over a typical seesaw Montenegrin track. I overtake a party of red-turbaned Bosnians leading wiry ponies and

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followed by their women-folk. They have journeyed from Sarajevo, which they left six days ago, and are pausing for a moment by the wayside. One by one they shake hands solemnly with me, answering my "God greet ye!" with the universal formula of "May thy luck be good!" Then an aged Montenegrin accosts me with a hearty inquiry as to the state of my health, and even as I answer him the white-washed walls of the upper monastery appear far above us through a break in the trees. The old man forgets me on the spot and turns his eyes upwards, to where lies the body of St. Vasili, crying with joy and pious thanks that it has been permitted him to come once more to Ostrog. The road ceases to climb, and I emerge on a long plateau, and by a gate enter the precincts of the lower monastery. Rows and rows of white-covered booths stretch up to the left, where men are busily occupied driving in long stakes and fixing the tent coverings. Girls are washing bottles and cleaning pans, and every one is bustling with the hurry of preparation, for in two days' time thousands of hungry and thirsty pilgrims will be clamouring for food, eager to break their long fast. At the farther end stand the substantial buildings of the monastery, the episcopal palace, and the tiny church, all opening on to an broad space, in whose centre grows a great tree.

The venerable Archimandrite receives me with open arms and leads me to my room, which the good bishop has placed at my disposal. Father Peroni is a wonderful little man, and that evening as we sit over our wine he tells me the story again, how exactly forty-nine years ago he formed one of the little band of thirty Montenegrins who, under the leadership of the Grand-Voivoda Mirko, held the upper monastery for ten days against fifteen thousand Turks.

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Those were stirring times, and my heart beats faster as he tells me how Mirko, the father of the present Prince, called even by the Turks "The Sword of Montenegro," during the siege seized a shell which had penetrated through a window and threw it back, down the precipice, into the midst of the raging Moslems, where it exploded: how the Turks vainly attempted to burn them out by throwing flaming straw upon the roof from the cliffs above, and how the Montenegrins at last came from all sides to their help. Those Turks on the cliffs were hurled down, and their bodies whizzed through the air past the monastery, and were dashed to pieces far below. As he speaks I can picture the wild scene once more. Attacked from all sides, the Turkish hordes look around them helplessly, wondering whence comes this hail of bullets. But their doubts are soon put to rest as well as their earthly troubles, and through the smoke dashes the gallant *bairaktar* or standard-bearer, followed by a band of reckless warriors, matchlock discarded, heavy handjar in hand. Even the fanatical courage of the Mussulman avails nothing against that savage rush, and with the despairing screams of their comrades hurtling through the air from the cliffs above them, they turn to fly. But whither? They are surrounded, and the rich green slopes become a bloody shambles. "How many fell?" I ask. The abbot shakes his head. "A thousand?" He smiles.

"In one pit alone we put eight hundred, and there were many such. To-day thou canst still find their bones on these heights, and thou needst not seek for long.

With a deprecatory shrug of his shoulders he bids me good-night, and I retire to dream of headless corpses, of a fierce battle with an eagle in mid-air, of falling hundreds of feet, catching a glimpse as I do so of the rock-crowned little

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monastery, and as I near the earth I fall in the arms of a driver who calls his horses asses. Then comes a great roaring as of mighty waters, and I awake to find the church bells ringing within a few feet of my window, calling the faithful to the early mass.

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Ostrog : At the Shrine of St. Vasili

ST. VASILI came from the Herzegovina a century ago. Legend hath it that the spot where now stands the little monastery was shown the saint by a miracle. But all the written records of his life and doings were destroyed by the Turks and his remains nearly captured.

The sun is still behind the rocky wall as I stand with Stefan below amongst the crowded booths and hesitate. Yet it makes such a fair picture in the bright light of the coming sun. The beech-forest between us and the little building above mercifully covers as with a mantle the horrible sights on the winding path that climbs to the upper monastery—sights which make the pilgrimage very real and extremely unpleasant. Stefan has no such qualms, and he urges me to start before the way becomes crowded and ere the sun tops the ridge.

We plunge into the wood, and our pilgrimage begins. At intervals of ten yards beggars form a spalier of squalor, disease, and filth. Hideous deformities are paraded to the best advantage, blind men turn up their sightless eyeballs to the leafy roof, mothers hold out poor tortured children, and the dumb rend the heart with horrible sounds no more resembling the human voice than the grunting of swine. The air is filled with their cries for alms, hands set on arms at im-

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possible angles are stretched forth, and before each is spread a mat for the offerings of the charitable.

"In the name of God and St. Vasili, pity me," says a gentle voice, and I look nervously yet compelled by the musical tones. I see the sweet face of a twelve-year-old maiden gazing at me piteously. In wonder that such a fair face should figure in that awful collection of humanity my eyes wander over her form, and then I understand.

Behind me strides a great turbaned Bosnian, handsome and jovial. His hands are full of gifts for the saint.

"Give me, of thy pity, a kreutzer," clamours a beggar.

"Wait, friend, till I return," he answers in hearty tones. "Seest thou not that I am laden to my utmost limit?"

"It is better to give to the helpless and maimed," whines another. "Give *me*, and I will pray that the holy Vasili shall return thy alms one hundred-fold."

Before us goes a Montenegrin woman, who gives her little daughter a small coin to deposit on each of the mats. Half shuddering, yet with curious glances, the child drops the money and hurries after her mother.

We pass a Turk who displays his legs, which end abruptly below the knee. He has bared the stumps to view, and the doctor's knife—or is it the Montenegrin handjar?—has not made a pretty sight. For many decades he has sat there during the pilgrimage, for he lost his feet on these very slopes when the Montenegrins raised the siege in 1863. Now he begs from his former enemies. A little farther lie two Montenegrin veterans, and each is minus a leg lost on Turkish battlefields. Blind men, who are the troubadours of the land, groan forth their dirge-like songs, breaking off suddenly when they hear that the footsteps have passed on, to commence when the next pilgrims approach. Many are

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swindlers, and these good Stefan shows me that I may not be led to spend my sympathy or my alms on unworthy objects.

"This man can speak as well as thou or I," he says, and facetiously asks a ragged individual who is emitting excruciating noises if he fears not divine retribution. The man darts an angry glance at us and ceases for a moment, only to begin again as he catches sight of new-comers.

"Thou art resting thy back, Jovo," says Stefan to another sturdy wretch with his feet in a sack. "Next week he will be carrying loads in Podgorica," he adds to me.

At length we have passed the last beggar, and before us stands the monastery. We have approached it from the side, and the hill falls away steeply from its base. The monks have utilized the less steep slope, and have built two or three terraces, where vegetables are growing. Then comes a bed of tree-tops, and far below are the tents of the booths. Built into the living rock, and reached by flights of steps, are the primitive abodes of the monks, the walls white-washed and with large crosses painted roughly on the smoke-blacked rocks. Above the monastery the precipice juts outwards, completely overhanging it, and then rises sheer many hundred feet. It is a unique spectacle, and the rock would seem to be hanging by a thread ready to crush the tiny buildings with the first breath of air.

Pilgrims arrive in a steady stream. Here we see a group of men and women prostrating themselves on the ground and kissing the lowest stone step before they proceed. Close to us a richly dressed woman of Mostar is taking off a pair of modern high-heeled boots and her white stockings, entering the sacred precincts barefooted. So each shows his fervour in his own particular way, and to-day I cannot see

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AT THE SHRINE OF ST. VASILI.

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a single pilgrim who has not come a journey of many days on foot, fasting the while and with much prayer.

To Father Ristifor we wend our way, up several stone flights of stairs, through a door where we must bend nearly double, and are ushered into the presence of the hermit. For the first moment he has forgotten me, this extraordinary octogenarian, and the next he has impulsively enfolded me in his arms and is kissing me. Then he presses raki upon me, has ordered coffee, and all the time he pats my arm, my shoulder, or my back in his joy.

"Ah, it is right that honour should be shown thee, my son," he says as I protest; for he has learnt that I am a guest of the bishop, and from Stefan how the Gospodar (prince) received me in Cetinje—an invariable open-sesame to loyal Montenegrin hearts. "Thou that hast journeyed from such a far land to us. Ah, but it does my heart good to see thee, an Englishman, and one of the true friends of our country." He is alluding to England's help once given twenty years ago. Other visitors come in, mostly women from the Herzegovina. They kiss his hand thrice and then lay in his lap gifts of clothing, richly embroidered handkerchiefs, or packets of food. In a trice the little room is crowded, and the old man sits and beams on us, not knowing whom next to embrace. Burly men fill the doorway and the narrow passage beyond, while through the tiny open window set in a frame of white can be seen the green mountains and woods—all feeling of distance lost—hanging like a picture on the whitewashed wall.

Just below this most perfect of miniature landscapes sits the hermit, his benevolent face smiling out of the snowy tangled beard and his hair falling like a mantle of fleece on his shoulders. Thus we leave him amongst the group of

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gaily dressed pilgrims and edge our way towards the shrine.

In a chamber, dimly lit by a little window hewn out of the rock, St. Vasili lies in a wooden coffin and covered in his robes. As my eyes grow accustomed to the half-light I see that the walls and arched ceiling are covered with crude paintings. A tall priest with luminous dark eyes and raven locks reaching far below his shoulders receives me. His long flowing black robes and high conical hat lend him a ghostly appearance in the gloom. Crouched in an indistinguishable heap kneels an Albanian woman at the foot of the coffin. Now a woman comes in and kneels before the priest to confess. He covers her head with his *pertrament* (broad stole), and she commences her confession. The priest reads a prayer from a book the while in a loud voice, so that even if we would we cannot hear her sins. As we again emerge we squeeze ourselves against the wall as two Bosnians half carry, half lead, a wretched youth scarce able to walk. Poor wretch! they bump his head violently upon the low lintel of the door, but still he smiles. His faith is great, and what is a little pain like that compared to the tortures of his many days' journey hither, supported on either side on the back of a pony, over paths of stone and rocks?

At the top of the monastery is a spring of water, and thither we ascend, Stefan relating the story of a wicked woman who once journeyed to St. Vasili hoping to make all good by a large gift of money which it is customary to place in a plate upon the breast of the saint. The gift—it was paper money—flew to the ground, and again she put it in the plate; but scarcely had she turned to go when it lay once more on the floor, though not a breath of air stirred the quiet of the shrine. Then the attendant priest took the money and

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gave it back to her, saying that the saint took not the gifts of evil people.

The terrace is full of thirsty men and women, some drinking, others pouring water over their hands. On the parapet we rest our arms and gaze at the view. Above us we cannot see, for the rock juts out beyond; but before us and below is stretched a panorama of peaceful beauty. The thread-like river Zeta in the valley, the lofty ridge opposite, on which nestles the lower monastery, form an incomparable landscape which must have ofttimes filled the soul of St. Vasili with that contentment which cometh only to those who are willing to give up the pleasures of the world for the service of God in the midst of His most perfect handiwork.

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Ostrog: Among the Booths

IT is evening. The slopes of Ostrog resemble the tented camp of a mediæval army as the flickering lamps of oil flash on silver corslets and bejewelled sword-hilts thrust in gay sashes. I see men in enormous red turbans—long drooping moustaches lending a ferocity to their sun-burned faces—jostling other giants in fez or little round cap as they go to and fro in the tents. Wild Turkish music mingles with a monotonous chant, to which a ring of men are solemnly dancing, and on the highest tier of tents a group is watching a pair of dancers who are vying with each other in the agility of their leaps. A hum of humanity ascends to the starlit heaven, punctuated by short, sharp yells and the hails of one who has lost his friend in the press and is calling him by name.

Yet it is the twentieth century, and I am walking with a Viennese doctor, a German clerk, and a Turkish merchant, at Ostrog, during the annual pilgrimage. Furthermore, the day is Sunday, at the conclusion of the festival, and the pilgrims are indulging in a few hours' well-earned enjoyment and gaiety. All will have left by the morning except a handful of Montenegrins, and many have journeys of more than a week across the wild mountain passes into the furthermost parts of Bosnia, the Herzegovina, and Dalmatia. They came fasting and laden with gifts, touching no meat or wine

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till they had laid their offerings at the tomb of St. Vasili and made their confession at his shrine.

On the raised porch of the palace sits the benevolent *Vladika* (bishop) of Montenegro; beside him is a war-worn Voivoda, his costly dress contrasting strangely with the black cassock and purple sash of the bishop. A group of priests surround their spiritual chief, who not more than half a century ago ruled the land as prince as well as bishop.

A huge ring of Montenegrins with linked arms are majestically dancing the *kolo* before him, singing quaint verses of the *Gospodar* when, twenty-five years earlier, he led them and their fathers to the last big war against the Turks. With one step to the left and three to the right, keeping time to their song, they slowly circle round the open space. Beyond the dancers stands a crowd of on-lookers many deep, steadfastly regarding the bishop on the steps above.

We watch the spectacle too, and converse in our tongues, when I notice a youth at my side who stares at me in open-mouthed wonder. I frown upon him, but not for a second does he relax that intense gaze. Half angered, I speak to him, asking why he stares at me so fixedly. He smiles frankly.

"I watch but thy lips when thou speakest in this strange tongue," he says. "I have never heard another tongue but mine own."

We edge our way outwards and go to the tent of Stefan for a glass of his excellent wine. He sees us coming, and unceremoniously bundles half a dozen guests from their seats on a long plank placed on upturned boxes.

"Seest thou not who comes?" we hear him say to one old man who is slow to move. Many are the war medals on his breast, and in his hand he holds a long tchibouque.

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"Nay," say I, seating myself at his side; "we are the strangers here, and I would talk to this old *junak*" (hero).

"As strangers must ye also be honoured," answers the "hero"; but his face lights up at my words. In his sash he carried a magnificent handjar, worth ten times the cost of his ragged clothing, and with a mute request I draw it from him.

"It has bitten the necks of many of thy countrymen," he says to Buto, the Turk, our friend, and we all laugh, for no ill-will is borne to-day.

Three kids are bleating piteously as a burly Montenegrin feels their ribs callously. He releases one from the tree to which they are bound in the circle of light before the tent, and another gives him an evil-looking knife. Shouldering the kid, he walks away. Before we leave he brings a skinned carcass back, and our host tempts us with the kidneys, which he will roast on the fire over there in the corner. Skilfully others spit the still warm body on a long stake, and bearing it off they place it over the fire, where a boy thoughtfully acts as turnspit. Many are the lambs and kids slaughtered and thus roasted whole to-day, and the cries of the victims mingle with the talk and laughter of the feasters.

We pay and go, passing another tent close by, which is oddly empty compared to the others. Its owner looks worried, for to him come few guests. There are not many who care to sit at the table of the traitor Juro. Since he sold his own brother for three hundred guldens, delivering him into the pitiless hand of the vendetta, all luck and prosperity have left him—ay, and his life is in danger from his own relations.

The Turkish music attracts us, and thither we wend our

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AMONGST THE BOOTHS.

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way. The booth is the most crowded of all, but again place is made for us on the instant. All is laughter and good humour in that bright-coloured assembly. The stormy music is at times well-nigh inaudible.

"Fear not," I say, laughing, to a sweetly fair maiden beside whom chance has seated me. She sits blushing and with downcast eyes, for by rights she should stand when men sit, and I and my clothes are still more strange. Others hear me, and a storm of merry chaff arises which still more embarrasses the shy girl. She looks like some fawn startled in a woodland glade, and the roses on her cheeks deepen.

"My sister is not wed," calls a tall young fellow, with a meaning laugh.

"Alas! she does not love me," I answer in the same spirit, as the serving-man brings huge bottles of wine.

Time flies apace amidst this gay scene, and when the Turks rest from their music, the Montenegrins sing. Not for a moment does the merriment pause till I hear the first word spoken in anger that day. Stefan, my servant, has found his seat appropriated by a man wearing the insignia of an officer of militia, during the few minutes he has gone to attend to the horses.

It comes like a flash. The intruder, a swarthy, ill-tempered man, shouts an insult, refusing to move. There is a lull in the noise, and Buto, the Turk, speaks him fairly.

"Thou liar and cheat," comes the answer, and Buto leaps like an arrow from the bow from his seat on to the table towards the man, who has at last jumped up and has drawn his revolver. But Buto never reaches him. In a second the intruder has been seized and is thrown down the steps to the path below. I follow, for I fear a shot fired at random into the crowded booth; but I find the man pinioned, his

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revolver in the hands of a stern-looking man, in whom I recognize one of the secret police. Seeing me, he salutes.

"I ask thy pardon," he says; "this man will be severely punished, and it will be many months ere he can again lay his hand on revolver when strangers are present."

We will beg him off in the morning, for already the heat of wine is leaving him, and he looks at us appealingly.

The incident is forgotten at once, and all is merriment again, though when the Turks who are from Bosnia strike up an Austrian military march, a Montenegrin rises and tells the leader to play some other tune, "else," he adds, "we will bind thee to the tent pole."

"I must go," says the doctor; "at noon I must be in Podgorica, and it is seven hours' ride."

We look at him in astonishment, and he as an answer nods towards the heavens. The stars are paling fast, and over the hills steals a faint glow of crimson. In the coming light men are saddling horses and hurrying to and fro. A string of pilgrims is already leaving the monastery gates. Ere the sun has topped the mountains, peace and solitude will reign o'er the heights of Ostrog once more. From the many paths leading into the valley comes the crackle of pistol-shots. It is the farewell of the Montenegrins.

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Ostrog. Deda

THE scene is brilliant in the extreme, and one that is most pleasing to the eye. It is also unique, for nowhere in the Balkans can such another variety of national costumes be witnessed. There are Bosnians, conspicuous by huge red turbans, dark blue tunics and baggy trousers closely fitting to the lower leg, great sashes and belts, once the resting-place of an armoury of weapons before Austria forbade the carrying of arms ; on their feet they wear *opanki*, shoes studded with enormous nails, and not seldom with real horse-shoes. Their women folk are not so picturesque, and can lay no claim to physical beauty as can the men. In one of the booths sit six such men, brawny giants, utterly unlike the equally big Montenegrins, whose costume gives them a more dapper appearance. From their wide white sleeves ceasing at the elbow appear muscular arms, but their faces are kindly and attractive. With them sit two Herzegovinians, very counterparts in dress to their Montenegrin brethren. The same little round cap perched at a more coquettish angle, smaller in size, and without the Prince's cipher, red and gold jackets, and wide blue breeches ; but in the expression of their faces is a difference and a very marked one too. They lack the open fearless look which stamps the mountaineers who defied the mighty Moslem for five hundred years. Extremely pretty are the women, in such a variegated and complicated costume that it defies

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description. One is dancing below us, a black tassel peeping out from her veiled head, covered with a bright red cap over which her hair is plaited. Now a cavalcade of Turks rides along the path, just arrived from Sarajevo. Amongst them are two women closely veiled, and as they pass us they bend their heads still more over the saddles, which they bestride, as do all the women of these lands. Moslems, Greek and Roman Catholics, even Protestants, all journey to St. Vasili.

At my side sits a venerable man clothed in European dress, except for a blue crowned Montenegrin cap, such as is worn by the clergy. His silvery hair falls on to his shoulders, and from his face shines the soul of a saint. It is Deda (grandfather), the patriot and recluse. He is beaming with happiness at the company of a stranger with whom he can talk of past days and other lands. Many are the wonderful stories he has told of the struggles of the Serbs against the Turks, and of the stirring times when the Karageorgević fought the Obrenović for the kingdom of Servia, and how he fled from Servia when his prince was finally expelled. I had met him the day I arrived in Ostrog, walking slowly but upright still, before the monastery. Involuntarily I had paused, and he noticing my questioning look had asked me if I sought "Arsenije Lazić," or, he had added, "perhaps thou hast heard of me as Deda?" And, indeed, I was seeking him, for there are few people in Montenegro who had not spoken to me of Deda. From that moment began a beautiful friendship between us. Three episodes of that friendship are graven in my memory: when he took me to his grave; as I sat one evening long into the night listening to his wonderful life; and, lastly, when he stood on the road before the monastery to bid me farewell.

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FATHER DEVAS' GRAVE

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In a lonely glade he has built his tomb and tends it daily. Once he had shown it to the Prince, saying: "Gospodar, it is meet and right that I should give what I can to the land of my fathers in return for the home that thou hast provided me with in my old age. Riches I have none, and so I leave my bones to Montenegro."

And I, too, had stood at the grave with its still living tenant at my side.

"Arsenije Lazić, first lieutenant of cavalry and faithful servant of" (in letters of gold) "Prince Alexander II. Karageorgević, born in the year 1821, and died in the year. . . ." I murmured a prayer that the space at the end of the inscription might long remain a blank and Deda had smiled and answered, "Nay, my son, I am not morbid, neither do I wish to die; but I am old and I am ready to go when God calls me. Read further." And I read the concluding sentence—

"Farewell, Montenegro. May the leaves of thy trees turn to gold. I go to my eternal rest."

Then we had gone back to the pulsating life below amongst the tents. In his barren cell we had sat together many hours. Once he told me how, refusing allegiance to the House of Obrenović and suspected of being a spy, "which," he added with his beautiful smile, "I was, for I and many others still hoped to win back our lawful Prince"—they had arrested him and thrown him into prison. "See," he said, baring his right leg, "my leg is still swollen where they chained me, and my right hand trembles, not from age, for the other is as steady as thine, but from the weight of the fetters I wore for three months. And they beat me with bags of sand on the breast and back, and though the blood gushed from my mouth they could not make me speak.

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'Ye may kill me,' I said, 'but speak I will not, for I have nothing to tell.' And so they let me go. I have been true to my Prince, and now I have my reward. For what can a man do more than carry iron and bear torture rather than break his oath?"

"When my father died," he said at another time, "he called me to his bed. I was but a boy then, yet his dying words are written here"—he tapped his forehead. "'Come hither, my son,' and I went to him and kissed him. The gash on his face was livid. It was a wound from the Turks, against whom he also fought for many years. 'My son, I am dying. Be good and honest even as I have ever striven to be. Take not that which is another's, and thine own give not. Shouldst thou find that which is not thine, so leave it where thou hast found it. What thou seest, say thou hast not seen. What thou hearest—thou hast heard nothing. I pardon thee all thy sins. Farewell. I am dying. Be good.'"

Deda had risen and stood with his hand on my head as he repeated the message spoken seventy years ago, and I saw that in spirit he was again standing by that deathbed in far-away Servia, a careless, reckless boy, hardly realizing then what those words meant.

Then he sighed and spoke of his own near death—

"I fear not death, but oh! it is terrible when I am sick. No one comes to me to tend me, and I must die alone. Not one of my family lives, and here they hate me. Yes, my son, it is so. They are jealous of my past, and what I know. Only my Prince loves me, and for that I am truly thankful."

Of these and of many other things he spoke often to me, and my heart went out to that lonely old man. He testified

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to the wonders worked at the shrine of St. Vasili, which he had seen with his own eyes.

"Six years ago," he said, "I too slept at the shrine, and I who have never known fear spent a night of such horror that even now my flesh creeps when I remember. I could not sleep for fear, and in the dead of the night an icy feeling crept over me, and clearly and distinctly I felt as if some one laid a cloth upon me three times, thus"—he laid his stick lightly upon my breast. "Yet next morning—aye, and whenever I visit the Holy Vasili I return down the hill walking as a man of forty. My strength returns to me, and steep as is the path, I need no stick to help me down."

Again I see Deda standing on the wide road some few hundred yards below the monastery. He has just blessed me in such beautiful words that I would have gladly bent my knee to that invocation. Then he had kissed me many times, for he said, "I fear I shall never see thee more, and I have learnt to love thee, my son." And I have left him hurriedly—there are tears rolling down that furrowed face.

There he stands, behind him the wooded slope leading up to the tiny monastery under the beetling cliff, and all around the glorious sunshine of life and strength. As I draw my revolver and give him the Montenegrin parting salute, he doffs his cap, and with an effort I turn the corner that shuts him off from view.

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Ostrog. The Church Militant

THE bells of the Monastery church at Ostrog are ringing violently and suddenly. The noise after the calm of the preceding moments is jarring, and I am still more displeased when Stefan bursts unceremoniously into my room. He seizes my cap and gives it to me, saying breathlessly "The Bishop."

A minute later, and I am standing with bared head before the tiny church, at whose portal, in gorgeous cope and bearing a jewelled cross, waits the little Archimandrite. Other priests support him on either side, their long hair flowing over their shoulders, men with weather-beaten faces speaking more of work in the fields in wind, rain, and fierce sun, than of the seclusion and studious lives of the monks of other lands. Two sturdy Montenegrins hold banners, but beyond two or three peasants the little square is empty.

A string of carriages enters the gate, driving rapidly with steaming horses, towards this resplendent group, which now moves slowly forward. The first carriage stops, and a small slightly made man of benevolent aspect alights. He removes his little blue Montenegrin cap and approaches the waiting priests, his plain black cassock relieved only by a broad purple sash; and a tiny jewelled crucifix hanging from a chain on his breast contrasts sharply with the heavy gold-embroidered copes of the others. He kisses the cross, and then they all go into the church. That little man, whose

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kindly, unmistakably good face would mark him anywhere as a man of distinction, is the Vladika (bishop) of Montenegro. Another old man follows him closely, gorgeous in the white, blue, and gold gala dress of the country, with many orders sparkling on his breast. He is the Minister of War; and then comes a third stately man dressed as a priest—the secretary of the Metropolitan.

An attendant train of black-robed priests and smart red-jacketed orderlies complete the picture, and the chanting of the priests within the church proclaims that the ceremonial reception has commenced.

With my arms on the parapet overlooking the great valley, I fall a-musing. I remember how once Father Filip and I sat together one afternoon and talked. Father Filip is the secretary and the Bishop's right hand, a big man with wonderfully expressive eyes. In the morning there had been some great Church festival, and he still wore on his broad breast a multitude of orders and medals. We had been talking politics—Montenegrins love to talk politics—and were discussing the next war, when Father Filip tapped his medals, saying—

"I should fight again, too. We priests, all of us, fight whenever danger threatens our country."

I nod, for this I know, but I encourage him to talk of past days, and, nothing loth, he gives me a graphic description of the battles before Antivari, when the Montenegrins captured that formidable fortress, and won the long-coveted way to the sea. I knew well those steep slopes, and had stood upon the shot-riddled walls of the now ruined stronghold of Antivari.

"And thus shall we carry everything before us, whoever shall be our enemy."

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"The western nations, too, are brave," I hazard, more to provoke him further than otherwise. "They have done even such deeds of daring as ye. Take thy friends, the Russians, for instance." I would have cited famous battles of Turk and Russian, but he smilingly shook his head.

"They, too, are brave," he says. "When we stormed Antivari we had a Russian general with us. We took great care of him, as is our wont with strangers, but he became angry, saying, 'We Russians fear not the bullet more than the Montenegrins,' and rode his horse to a place where the bullets flew thickest. 'Thou art brave,' I answered, 'but not so brave as are the Montenegrins,' and I ran forward alone to within fifty yards of the walls of the Turkish fortress. It was even as I said: the Russian held his ground and came not. Laughing, I then ran back to him and said, 'What I have done any Montenegrin would do'; and the Russian spoke no more of bravery.

"Not only are our men brave," went on Father Filip, "but our women too. What sayest thou of a woman who having lost her husband and all her four sons in battle, refused to weep, saying she rejoiced rather that her dearest ones had died the death of heroes? 'What greater honour can befall me,' she said, 'than that my husband and my sons should give their lives for the land of their birth? Nay, I am proud, lonely and desolate as will be my life without them.'"

And my thoughts wander back to the time I visited the Monastery of Moraća, far away in the mountains of the Brda. Perched on the summit of a high cliff, at whose base tears and races the foaming river from which the monastery takes its name; surrounded by lofty mountains and dense forests,

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far away from roads and towns, there too I had listened to tales of blood and war. The venerable Archimandrite Michel Dozić had peopled those slopes again with yelling Moslems, the sweet air was rent once more with the rattle of musketry, and the peaceful courtyard, now grass-grown and neglected, he filled with headless corpses. A handful of Montenegrins are standing at the only entrance and, enticed by great cunning, a company of Turks are being admitted one by one. Once inside, the unhappy Turk finds not a few monks, but a score of Montenegrins, and instead of flinging open the gate, his head goes to swell the gory heap. The handjars are dripping blood, and the other Turks waiting at the gate scent treachery and rush back to the main body. Then Mehemet Ali places guns to bombard the sacred buildings, while in the church kneels the then Archimandrite Mitrofan, praying for succour ere it be too late. It is the present bishop who kneels there, and his prayer is answered by the tall, grave man, Michel Dozić, at whose table I was sitting. He, at the head of his battalion, relieved the monastery which he now governs as abbot. As at Ostrog, the Turks were caught, surrounded, and slaughtered in thousands by a numerically far inferior army of the most reckless fighters that the world has ever seen.

And again here at Ostrog, the little Archimandrite, so oddly small for a Montenegrin, who in gorgeous cope has just received the bishop—was one of the little band whose heroic defence of the Upper Monastery is one of Montenegro's most glorious feats. The chanting in the church ceases, and I turn to see the venerable bishop leaving, followed by his train of priests. He sees me and beckons me to come to him. He inquires if everything is as I wish, for I am his guest.

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"I am glad thou lovest Ostrog. Stay as long as thou wilt, for thou art very welcome."

Then he passes on, the little knot of peasants pushing forward to kiss his hand and the cross hanging on his breast.

"This afternoon I will come to thee," says Father Filip, pressing my hand. "I have much to talk to thee about."

I smile, for I know we shall speak of Russia's friendship, of the danger from Austria and the moral right that Montenegro holds to rule the Herzegovina.

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The Sheep-Lifters

THERE is a feeling of suppressed excitement in the air this evening. It is nine o'clock, and the billiard-room of the Hotel Balsha is unwontedly crowded, to the great inconvenience of the players, a neat young Turk and a grizzled old Montenegrin. The terms "billiard-room" and "hotel" are perhaps misleading, suggesting leather lounges and other appurtenances of civilization; but beyond the war-worn table, with its patched cloth and springless cushions, and the fact that sleeping accommodation is provided upstairs or in the kitchen, and on shake-downs in the dining-room, according to the number of guests—none are ever turned away—there is nothing to justify the use of these names.

The governor of Podgorica is upstairs in his room, closeted with the brigadier and the captain of gendarmes. Messengers are constantly coming and going, and it is significant that they all carry rifles this evening. On the stairs, on the landing above, and in the hall, are at least a score of men standing, leaning on their rifles. In vain I attempt to pump Milan, the governor's private secretary, who has just come in and seated himself at our table.

"I know you are hatching up a little war or something," I expostulate, "otherwise old Captain Tomo of the police would not have declined a glass of wine. He was visibly

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swollen with importance when he went up to the governor just now."

But Milan only smiles vaguely in answer.

"It is a wet night," he says, and I glance at the rain-washed window. Through the blurred glass is a face, indistinguishable yet familiar, and I look closer. There is a movement as if a finger is beckoning from outside, and with a muttered excuse I leave the room. It is Petar, my friend the gendarme, a merry soul, and the companion of many a midnight escapade in the old Turkish quarter, where he has watched over us when we have serenaded the Turks. He draws me cautiously under the shelter of a doorway, and tells me in an impressive whisper to get my rifle.

"Cover it under thy mantle," he adds. "Let none guess that thou art armed, and then meet me at the corner."

Hurriedly I edge my way through the waiting men, and in my room I hear the subdued voices of the governor's council through the thin partition.

Buckling on my revolver, and slipping a magazine into the carbine, another in my pocket, covering all in the folds of my greatcoat, I carelessly, though with beating heart, push through the crowd again out into the stormy night. Petar grins appreciatively as I tap the carbine and thank him for warning me. Glancing hastily around to see that no one is watching us, he takes the path towards the border, and in an instant we are swallowed up in the darkness. The clock chimes the half hour, and a few seconds later the voices of the muezzins from their lofty perches break the stillness of the night with their final call to prayer.

Silently Petar leads the way along the little river Ribnica —I well content to wait till he shall explain—his soft opankis making no sound on the stone-strewn ground, till he pauses,

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and, climbing down the steep river-bank, halts under the shelter of a cave. Taking off his broad *struka* he lays it on the ground, and with our backs against the wall we recline at our ease. I give Petar my tobacco-tin and ask for an explanation; but first he deftly rolls two cigarettes, and in the light of the match I see that his face is wreathed in smiles.

"Nizams are coming," he says, blowing out the fragrant smoke and chuckling. "They are coming to raid the sheep on Lazo's farm over yonder."

"How dost thou know?" I ask impatiently. "Have they telegraphed their departure to the governor?"

"Nay," says Petar; "but Achmet the Turk has betrayed them. He has bought the right to return to his home in Podgorica with this information. Thou knowest he stole rifles not long ago?"

I nod, and ask how *he* knows this.

"Achmet's brother is my friend, Gospodin. And ere the governor knew, I had thought of thee, but dared not speak till now for fear that they would guess I was telling thee. At midnight they come and cross the river at the ford, and there we shall await them."

"How many come?" I inquired.

"Six, a dozen perhaps, not more," he answers; "but it is not them we fear. The firing may bring the Albanians down to the border, for it is but a rifle-shot distant. Now wait here till another hour is past, and then I will take thee to the spot where thou canst see all in safety."

"Hast thou no fear that we may not, too, be fired at by our friends?" I query. "The night is very dark, and how can the others distinguish us?"

"Nay," says Petar; "for that I have arranged. I am

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detailed with a score of others to watch the ford, and at eleven o'clock we meet there." His voice is reproachful as he adds, "Dost thou think I would lead thee into *danger?*"

I apologize, knowing well the caution taken by these reckless men for the safety of their guests; yet I muse how good Petar will safeguard me when the bullets fly at random. The time passes quickly, for Petar is an interesting talker, and the clock chimes out again.

"It is time," he says, and we rise, enveloping ourselves in our cloaks. He walks along the tiny path below the overhanging cliff; for the Ribnica lies in a deep cutting, and not another word does he vouchsafe till, with a hoarse whisper, he answers a crisp challenge. Then other figures rise from the surrounding boulders. All the men I know, and silently they push forward and grasp me by the hand in welcome. Then Petar takes me to another cave smaller than the last, and with a natural parapet, over which I clamber. Once inside I see that no bullet can penetrate here, and smile at the thoughtfulness of these men. It is a weird scene. I can just distinguish the rough outlines of the great boulders which strew the river-bed, and opposite is the outline of the lofty bank, straight and unbroken. The river rushes with a gurgling, pleasant sound over the shallow ford, and now, except Petar, who is peering intently over the parapet, not a soul is to be seen. The darkness has utterly swallowed up that little crowd of men, yet I know each boulder hides a keenly vigilant Montenegrin, like the watcher at my side, with rifle ready in the hand. Still the rain beats down, and I fall a-dreaming as the minutes drag wearily by. Perhaps I doze, when suddenly Petar lays his hand on my arm and points. With a start

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I follow the direction of that hand, and at first see nothing. Petar relaxes my arm, and I see that he is aiming. Then I see shadowy figures moving noiselessly between the boulders, and my heart beats to suffocation. I count six of them gliding in single file, a pace or two separating each from the other. But two or three boulders divide the foremost man from the ford, who pauses instinctively, holding up his arm as a signal. The next instant a voice rings out, "Halt and surrender!" For an answer the six rifles of the Turks crash in the silence. Then the rifle at my elbow cracks with a report like thunder, flashes dart out from every boulder, and Petar has leapt the parapet. Scarce knowing what I do, I follow him, and a figure rushes up towards us. Petar clubs his rifle, but the fugitive deals him a mighty blow with his fist and he reels backwards, but recovers himself and sends a bullet after the flying man. Then follows a death-like stillness for a few seconds, and the leader of the Montenegrins shouts an order to cease firing in the ravine and assemble on the cliff. Some scatter over the great plain, and now a shot rings out in the distance, then another and another, till the whole country-side would seem to be alive with the reports of rifles. The great slope of Fundina becomes a bed of fireflies, as the peasants turn out and pass on the alarm to their brethren in the mountains.

"Thou wast foolish to leave the cave," says a voice at my elbow. It is Petar, wiping the blood from a cut in his forehead.

"Why do they fire on the hills?" I ask. My voice surprises me, and I am ashamed, for it trembles. "Are the Albanians attacking in force?"

"Nay, Gospodin," says Petar grimly; "none now will

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venture across the border to-night. That is the signal of alarm, and ere thou returnest to the town it will be full of men."

And it was so. The street before the hotel is thick with men, many thousands of them, in bands under the leadership of their officers. Even as I go to my room, tired and wet to the skin, I hear still the distant tap of rifles from the border, and to this strange music, mingling with the buzz of the men in the street below, I fall asleep.

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The Morning After

"THOU sleepest even as a man that hath had no rest for many nights," says Petar smiling. I rub my eyes, for the room is full of sunlight. "Come," he goes on, "thy horse is ready saddled below, and I will show thee the spot where we fought last night."

Quickly I dress myself, and the events of last night crowd into my brain, confused and indistinct as a dream. Gone is that mysterious army of men which had filled the street last night, and the only indications of the storm are lowering banks of clouds rolling over the mountains in the distance. Refreshed by the rain, the earth smells sweetly in the keen morning air, and drops sparkle on the trees in the sunshine.

Few people are about: my horse prances and chafes at the bit as we cross the little bridge, climbing the short steep ascent to the great plain of the Zeta. With long quick steps Petar walks at my side, and ever and anon he looks up at me with his bright smile. His tanned face shows no traces of the long vigil through the night which he and others have kept.

"No," he says in answer to my question, "there came no more visitors. They were but a handful of half-starved soldiers from a frontier blockhouse seeking food. Had they but surrendered we should not have fired, but they sought their death." And Petar shrugs his shoulders.

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It is not far across the plain. In half an hour we reach the fatal spot, where many men stand and lie about on the rain-sodden ground. Across the level sward towards the border not a soul can be seen; then come little houses, square and uninteresting — they are the guardhouses; and after them the mountains rising steeply into the banks of clouds. Doubtless they are dotted with waiting men, who would dearly love to descend on the plain and try conclusions with the Montenegrins. But woe betide the man who ventures to-day within range of the frontier guards!

"See," says Petar, leading me down a steep path towards the foaming stream, "here they came. Each of these boulders hid a man, and here it was that the leading man halted. He must have caught some sound. Dost thou remember?" I nod vigorously. Never shall I forget that terrible second when those doomed men paused on the brink of eternity. "*They* fired at random. Look at the stars on the rocks, though not one fired a second shot. Come," and he goes towards the little cave that sheltered us. We turn a corner abruptly, and there at my feet lies a horrid sight. A man, in the ragged uniform of the Turkish infantry, half lies, half sits, with one knee drawn up as if in vain endeavour to rise. His hands have dug deep holes in the soft earth as he fought against death, and on his upturned face is depicted in awful colours his last agony. Sick and faint I turn to go; but Petar indifferently points to the little bloodstained jagged holes in the uniform. "Seven," he says laconically, checking them off with his finger.

"Good shooting," I answer, with what must be a ghastly smile, and I go towards another gendarme who is munching bread a little distance away. He proffers me a piece,

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which I refuse, and take a draught of raki from the bottle at his side.

"Thou art pale," says the man, glancing at me keenly. "Hast thou, too, watched through the night?"

My reply is indistinct, and I seat myself upon a rock. It is indeed a scene fitted to doings of death, yet the warm sunshine lends to it an air of peace. Jagged boulders dot the ravine in all directions, and in and out winds the path from the bank above to the water's edge, where with a twirl the river broadens out to the ford. The banks shelve inwards, forming a series of caves, and here and there masses of rock hang threateningly, awaiting the time when they, too, shall break away to join the confusion below. Petar joins us, and indicates a spot close by.

"There the other man struck me in his flight. He ran up that steep bank with eight bullets in him, and the ninth he got from me. That killed him, though he kept on for several hundred yards."

I see that Petar will not let me off, and I follow him up the path the stricken man took. Filled with wonder at such vitality, I emerge panting on the plain that ends so abruptly, as if cut with a knife at the river-bed. Two hundred yards away he lies face downwards, his foot caught in a bramble. He is a magnificent man, of herculean proportions, and through his back is the bullet-hole which Petar proudly claims as his work.

"Another fled, wounded too, and one of the border guards shot him with his revolver. Wilt thou see him too?"

I decline. "It is enough," I respond.

"This will make good writing," says Petar beaming, "will it not? And wilt thou speak of me?"

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I signify that he will be the hero of the story.

"In England ye have no such fights?" he asks, rolling me a cigarette.

"We have no borders," I explain. "It is an island."

He looks disappointed. Plainly England sinks in his estimation, and I hurry to explain that in past days we had many such border raids when English and Scot were as Albanian and Montenegrin.

"Then we have our colonies," I add, and tell him of tribal wars in Northern India, of the Dervishes and the Zulus, and what I can remember at the moment. He is impressed.

"Then it must be good to be an Englishman," he says, nodding approvingly.

A group of horsemen is approaching, and Petar springs to the attention. It is the governor, a handsome, big man, and some of his officers. He smiles as he sees me.

"I was afraid that you would have been here last night," he says in Italian, shaking hands. "I have special orders for your safety."

"The secret was very well kept," I answer, with a reassuring glance at Petar, who is looking uncomfortable.

"You must not ride near the border—it will be very dangerous for a few weeks," and turning to Petar he gives him an order not to leave my side or let me wander farther away in this direction. Petar salutes, and winks at me as the governor rides off.

Then we go back to breakfast, which he takes with me after many protests as to the honour I am doing him.

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BRIDGE OVER THE MORAĆA.

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Across the Border

THERE seems very little danger about the place, neither did the ride hither give any other impressions than that of an ordinary canter over a particularly level piece of country.

We are sitting in a room, which consists of windows and mats. Beyond a few rickety chairs produced for us and one or two Albanians squatting cross-legged on the floor, it is absolutely bare. The room, being on the first floor, commands through its many windows, devoid of glass, a view of the great square of Tusi, its fringe of disreputable hovels and attendant multitude of scavenger dogs. A little farther away to the left is a stream, and a primitive bridge leading to a simple building, before which squads of Turkish infantry are learning the new Prussian march. To the right a small hill rises from the level plain, on the top is a fort, and, broken occasionally by similar little hills, the great plain stretches away till it ends in the shimmery haze of the Lake of Scutari. Immediately behind the town is a great barren mountain, the first of the chain that tumbles in wild confusion from the plain of the Zeta, right across to Servia.

Just below us sits an aged man washing his head; presently another old man approaches him with a razor and shaves his face and head. Across the ford, disdaining the use of the bridge, three unwieldy creaking two-wheeled

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carts with enormous loads of hay are drawn by patient oxen. The drivers, wild-looking men, their heads and faces swathed in cloths, each with a Martini rifle swinging picturesquely and handily from the shoulder, urge the oxen forward with long sticks. Two or three children in fezes are busily scraping ox-hides with knifes, and lithe maidens in wide trousers cross the square with large pots of water on their heads. There is an air of sleepy indifference about the picture quite at variance with the rumoured dangerous character of the inhabitants; but all the same, should a Montenegrin show his face amidst this peaceful scene, his life would be worth just about two minutes' purchase.

That is why Buto the Turk has accompanied us, and the other man is an Austrian driver carefully wearing a European peaked cap. We stand a round of coffee, and rise perceptibly in the estimation of the other guests. One of them rolls us cigarettes, and they bring us little cups of sweetened milk.

Albert, a victim to the picture post-card craze, suggests sending a collection away to his friends, and we go to the post-office and inspect the cards. Owing to the amount of writing and elaborate decoration on the face of the card, he decides to send them, even if there is no picture on the back.

There is small chance of their ever reaching their destination, as I know from experience. "Also," says the genial postmaster, "a mail went yesterday." "The next leaves?" we query. The postmaster signifies with an eloquent gesture that this is a matter beyond him, and one to be decided by divine will.

We write about a dozen cards, and stop because there are no more. We have used up his stock and apologize. The postmaster smiles, and says politely that it does not matter.

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In a month or so he is expecting more and in the meantime the good people of Tusi must write letters. Then he discovers that we must affix an additional stamp, the cards being for inland use. As this distinctly adds to the highly effective appearance of the cards, we cheerfully buy the extra stamps, but of these he has only eight. Before we leave we have to tell him the names of the addressees and the destination, for him to add in Turkish characters. This gives rise to much quaint phonetic spelling, and when we pay we find each card has cost about double that of a foreign letter in other lands. Buto explains this to the postmaster with much heat and gesticulation, but without success. We leave him solemnly stamping each card, taking great care —as he shows us—that the post-mark shall be clearly legible.

I have a few lines of introduction to the military commandant from the Turkish consul at Podgorica, and this we proceed to present in state. The Beg lives in a two-storied building: the ground-floor being in a dilapidated condition, he inhabits the upper story, and at his door stands a very ragged sentry, who presents arms as we pass. It is, even for us, an unwonted honour, and impresses Albert greatly. An unkempt officer presents us, and we bow towards an elderly Turk, who uncurls his legs preparatory to rising. We all shake hands very solemnly, and are waved to a bench opposite. Buto and the Beg converse in Turkish, while we drink coffee and accept cigarettes from the other two men in the room, a *hodja* (priest) and a civilian. This ceremonial duty over, we again bow, shake hands, and leave the room, to every one's relief, the ragged sentry again according us full military honours. We negotiate the broken staircase with caution, and decide that we have seen

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enough of Tusi. Ten minutes later we are in the saddle and cantering out of the town, preceded and followed by a dozen Turkish soldiers. It is only half an hour to the border, it is true; but accidents have happened, and the mountaineers are very much on the war-path just now, since nine of them were shot a few weeks ago.

At the border blockhouse, over which waves a very faded specimen of the Star and Crescent banner, we part from our escort, and pause for a moment on the narrow bridge spanning the historical Cievna. Deep down in a great fissure the green water rushes as through a sluice. It is broader below than at the top, over which a man could jump with ease. With a swirl and a roar the water rushes past, breaking here and there into foamy patches. Many a hunted man, both Albanian and Montenegrin, has poured his life-blood into those clear waters. Few streams in Europe have witnessed such cruel deeds of death as has the little Cievna. Its source is in the unknown Proclotea, "the accursed mountains" of history, and indeed of to-day, for none can penetrate them. For the greater part of its course it forms the border-line between two races living in perpetual feud with each other, and has been crossed and recrossed thousands of times by men intent on murder and with the lust of blood in their hearts.

We ride on. The evening is yet young, and Buto proposes a longer way home. We ford the Ribnica at the same spot as did the ill-fated Turkish soldiers from the very blockhouse we have just left, and note the mournful little cairns erected at the spots where Montenegrin bullets laid them low.

A young man of Kuć, on his way to his mountain home, joins us as we walk our horses for a spell. He strides beside

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CHURCH PARADE.

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Buto a little distance from me, yet I can overhear the conversation. He inquires in flattering terms as to who I am.

"An English general," answers the mendacious Turk, "just from the Transvaal war."

The young mountaineer gazes at me in wonder and with great respect. He also thinks I do not understand his language, and I blush at his compliments on my general appearance and probable accomplishments.

"Yes," continues Buto, indulging freely in this opportunity for "embroidery," "and he has one thousand florins a-day to spend as he likes. Even now in Tusi he has spent above thirty florins in coffee for the whole village."

I consider the well-meaning Buto has sufficiently perjured himself, and urge my steed into a gallop. It is dark when we ride into Podgorica by another road than that we should have ordinarily used. It is a thoughless action, and causes the aged *bairaktar* and other friendly Turks to tramp to the borders seeking us that evening. It is well to be punctual in the Zeta, and to keep to the regulation paths and routes, should one wish to spare anxiety to expectant friends.

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Church Parade

THE view is worth the climb, though Stefan, leaning on his rifle and mopping his brow, replies in monosyllables to my outburst of enthusiasm. The horses are nodding their heads vigorously,and their breath comes in short snorts, bear ing witness to the heat and the long ascent. For four hours we have climbed from the valley of the Zeta, now stretched out like a map below us, with the great Lake of Scutari beyond, already hazy in the coming heat. Before us lies the rocky tableland of Zatrijebać, and a mere speck in that sea of boulders is the little red-roofed church, our destination. The day is Sunday, and we are going to mass there and to rejoice the heart of good Father Giulio, the young Franciscan pastor of this savage flock. Great snow-clad mountains rise up before us, a medley of jagged peaks and sombre ravines forming Northern Albania. We have not been more than a rifle-shot away from the border since we left Podgorica at daybreak. We walk down the steep path, our horses following us like well-trained dogs. At the foot we mount, and now the first houses of that scattered parish of Zatrijebać are passed, and from the many paths groups of men are converging on the main track. It is the congregation, and they are going to church, like the Covenanters of old, armed to the teeth. They are a pure-blooded Albanian clan under Montenegrin rule, clad as are their

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brothers in the mountains opposite, with but small distinctions in their costume, such as mark the different tribes. In common, too, with the rest of Northern Albanians, they are devout Roman Catholics, yet the Prince reckons them as his trustiest subjects. Not for nothing do they speak of their courage as proverbial. "As brave as the men of Zatrijebać" is a saying, and honestly they have earned the compliment, and right well do they maintain it.

Under a large tree some dozen men have halted; friends hail them from the hillsides, and they are waiting for them. "God greet ye!" we say as we approach; but they give us the Albanian answer, "Well met, O brothers!"

Splendid men they are, in spotless white, the jackets with that quaint zigzag bordering of black braid which marks the clan. About their heads they wear long cloths, wound first round the top of the head, then round their sun-burnt faces, and finally about their neck. Tight-fitting black-braided trousers and a bandolier of cartridges as a sash, in which is stuck a long revolver, make up their picturesque attire.

They join us, and we ride on in the midst of that armed throng as if bent on a dare-devil border foray rather than to God's house. Rifles are slung as only the Albanians carry them, hanging from the right shoulder, nearly at right angles from the body, and hand resting on the butt. Few speak Serb, and one walks at my side.

"Is it loaded?" he asks, with a glance at my carbine. "It is well," he says, as I show him the magazine. "We have treacherous neighbours," and he nods at the hill on our right.

Fully a hundred men have joined us ere we near the church, and I canter on to greet the Father, who is doubtless meditating on his sermon. The churchyard is full, and all

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press to the low wall in undisguised amazement. They take me for the doctor, the only being they deem it possible to visit them in European clothes. One comes hurriedly forward unbandaging his arm, and a woman inquires at what hour I shall vaccinate.

A few minutes later, after nearly effecting an entrance by force—the Albanian housekeeper expostulating indignantly at my intrusion till she recognized me—and I am enfolded in the arms of the impulsive monk. A stalwart Albanian, fully armed, likewise bestows on me the kiss of greeting: he is the young sacristan. We sit and talk, for it is a year since we met, and my eye falls on certain jagged holes in the brown habit of Father Giulio. I had heard the story how his habit was riddled with bullets a few months ago while ministering to the dying on the field of battle. He notices my glance, and smiles deprecatingly.

"After mass," he says.

A few privileged old men come in bearing their weekly gifts—one a bottle of milk, another a cheese. They use the universal Catholic Albanian salutation, "May Jesus Christ be praised!" Father Giulio nods, and the sacristan goes out. A few moments later and a bell sounds over the peaceful scene. It is the signal for prayer, and a wild chanting commences.

"Pater noster," explains the young priest. "Now follows the Ave Maria. I have taught them to sing these prayers, but it was hard. Their idea of music is so different from ours," and he sighs, thinking of sunny musical Italy and her grand singers; for he was once a student of philosophy in Rome, a gay young cavalier of ancient lineage, and still can sing the love-songs of his native city of Naples—though he does so reluctantly, and only when he has been enticed down for

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a few days' change to the semi-civilization of Podgorica.

"Even now they have brought an element of their own music into mine."

It is indeed a strange music, rising and falling in quaint cadences, oddly like the weird chanting of the shepherds on the lonely mountain pasturages, yet breaking suddenly off into the old-fashioned Catholic intonations.

"I must prepare now," he says. "You can stand by the high altar if you will and watch the congregation."

But I know, pious as are the Albanians, my presence there would sadly detract from their religious duties, and I go round to the main portal and enter there.

What a quaint sight!

First come the women and girls, the younger ones greatly excited at my appearance; then the men, their head-cloths thrust back on their shoulders, disclosing half-shaven heads and great tufts of hair at the back. Inside the altar-rails are boys and three or four men, and they are the choir. Their singing is execrable. All are kneeling, or rather squatting on their feet, save two Montenegrins of the Orthodox Church—gendarmes responsible for the order of the district—and they are standing motionless in the midst of this strange assembly.

The service proceeds. At the most sacred part one and all prostrate themselves on the earthen floor, and the priest, clothed in rich-coloured vestments, is the only familiar object which meets the eye. The server is the same Albanian who rang the bell for prayer, and as he censes the priest and then the congregation, the incongruity of the scene is brought home; for he is in the full costume of an Albanian clansman, bandolier and revolver complete. He, too, collects the offertory, stalking in and out of the pros-

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trate worshippers, clanking the coins in a tin can as he goes. Should one have no small money he opens the can and counts out the required change.

Strangest of spectacles! With mixed feelings I emerge in the open. Round the walls are stacked rifles, from the branches of the trees hang rifles, all loaded, and amongst them is the trumpet ready to blow the alarm. Two hundred yards away is the border. In the shade of a tree bearing such quaint fruit upon its branches I await the conclusion of the mass, and then the monk joins me, and we walk to the edge of the ravine of the Cievna, a view wellnigh unparalleled in the world. Three thousand feet below, the little stream winds like a silver thread; opposite, the mountains rise far above us in height, towering in chains one above the other. The sides of the ravine are inaccessible save here and there where a path zigzags down into the depths and up again on the other side. Those snow-capped peaks look so near that the heat is intensified by that cool contrast.

"It was here they fought. A little below us," says the monk, pointing to a shelving crag, "and there it was that I got these holes in my habit. It was dusk, you see, and they probably could not distinguish my dress. Also it was the most hotly contested point. We had two killed and five wounded at that spot. Yes; it was about the pasturages, of course. I did my best to stop the fight, and called them all to church; but while I was preaching the first shot was fired. Then of course it was no use speaking more, and I went with them. No; I was not afraid. Why should I be? My place is amongst my flock at all times. But they are brave, my flock. Sixty of them only against one thousand, and they drove them back till darkness stopped them.

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Afterwards it was dreadful when they brought the dead to the church and watched over them all night. That was worse than the battle. Over there, on yonder precipice, they fought twenty years ago. Come; it is time for dinner."

A young woman clothed in black—she could not be more than eighteen—passes us.

"She is one of the widows," says Father Giulio, acknowledging her reverence.

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Border Heroism

"GOOD morning, Gospodja. Canst thou brew us a black coffee?"

The woman had run out of the hut at the clatter of our horses' hoofs, as they followed us up the last steep hill to Fundina. The day was still young, yet the sun burnt down on us with such lusty vigour that coats had been long discarded and our weapons were weighty nuisances.

"God greet ye, Gospodini," she says, bending over our hands in turn. "Coffee ye can have and a draught of spring water. More we have not in our poor han."

She is a sturdy black-eyed woman, stern and serious as a man, but her eyes have the look of sleeplessness and long vigil.

"Where is Kećo, thy husband?"

"Away in the fields above. I will send for him." She nods towards the lofty slope above us, which terminates in a sheer precipice of grey rocks. The village—half a dozen huts—straggles up the hill, and one or two houses dot the valley below; but otherwise it is a wild and desolate scene, the doorway of the mountainous regions of north-east Montenegro and the alpine wilderness of Albania. At the foot of the slope stretches the vast plain of the Zeta, with pleasant Podgorica in its middle, a tiny oasis in that rolling veldt, from which we have journeyed this morning.

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MONTENEGRIN OFFICERS IN GALA COSTUME.

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"Let him be," we answer, "for towards evening we return. Is he well and still unhurt?"

"He is well, thanks be to God!" responds the woman briskly, setting water to boil in a tiny tin can among the smouldering ashes of the wood fire on the floor. She blows the embers into flame, talking disjointedly as she does so—

"We have not slept this night. They were seen towards dusk, and we watched till daybreak. Treacherous dogs! —look here. They have begun firing at women—God curse them!"

In her skirt she displays a ragged bullet-hole, and spits with contempt on the earthen floor.

"Yes," she continues, "to draw my man they fired at me while he was in the hut, but he had his revenge. Two of them took remembrances back to Dinoš."

Dinoš is a village behind the ridge opposite, in Albania, inhabited by a set of cut-throats and thieves, who since Kećo avenged an insult by shooting two men in the street at midday have rested not to wipe out the shame. Seldom has such a deed of reckless bravery been done in these lands as that of crossing the border in broad daylight and killing his enemies in full sight of the entire village. This Kećo has done, and his fame as a hero is great in Montenegro. Grimly and contemptuously he sits and waits for the bullet that *must* finally lay him low, but he watches incessantly. A few more deaths have been added to his reckoning since then, and the men of Dinoš are more wary. Still it is a terrible life to lead for him, and perhaps more so for his young wife. We mention this to her as she hands us our coffee deftly on a tray. She laughs scornfully.

"My man must die, but not yet. When he does I shall

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be the widow of a hero, and as proud as any woman in the land. First he will kill many yet."

"Thou hast no children, Gospodja. Art thou glad?"

"Yea, I am glad. My mother bore seven sons, and all were killed one night on these hills in a blood-feud. Their heads were taken to Dinoš, but my mother stole across at night and brought them back. Thus they were buried as men. I remember that night, and then I am glad that I am barren." She pauses for a moment. "God punish me for my words, for who shall avenge my husband? Who is more fitted than a son?"

"What do we pay thee?" we are saying.

"What thou wilt. Ye are very welcome."

The sun is nearing the farthermost range when we again draw rein before Kećo's house. We are late, for in the mountains we had struck upon an old acquaintance, one Achmet Uiko, assassin, murderer, and very good fellow when not actively engaged in business. We had met him saddling up outside a wayside han on the border two hours' distance from here, in the company of a villainous set of Albanians in spotless white head-cloths, the head-gear of the clan of Gusinje, perhaps the most treacherous clan of the whole of Albania. Achmet had insisted on playing host, and in the midst of that assembly in a half-dark room we had consumed much raki. Each man sat with his rifle between his knees, and eyed us with suspicious curiosity. Then Achmet had proposed to us to visit him in his little fortress on the border, given him by a generous Prince, and spend the night.

"Thou hast long promised to come," he had said to me, to whom once he had narrated the story of his life—a story as full of adventure and hair-breadth escapes as any ever

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written—and told of his murders with a simple ingenuity that caused his listener to pinch himself repeatedly. I urged lamely the expense of the horse, which I must return that evening, being hired; but he had promptly offered to pay for it himself. I accepted; but the trusty Stefan, my servant, had got into trouble in the meanwhile with a man of Gusinje who had demanded to examine his rifle. Stefan has no tact, and even Achmet admitted it were better to go.

"Hadst thou gone," said Stefan, as we rode away, "I would have accompanied thee; but we should not have seen Podgorica to-morrow nor the next day. Treacherous scoundrels!"

And I had great difficulty to prevent the fiery ex-Hungarian sergeant from shaking his fist at the group.

"We should have been safe with Achmet," I expostulate. "He has eaten bread in my house."

"I trust not any man who lives across the border, or who comes from there." (Achmet is a Christian Turk, though now a loyal subject of the Prince.)

That is the worst of Stefan. He is prejudiced, and not a safe man to take amongst Albanians or Turks.

The villagers of Fundina are congregated on the little stone platform before Kećo's house. The men, each with his rifle, greet me impulsively, for they know me well. They chase away the too curious children, and the next moment one has borne off my field-glasses to a delighted group, and another who has seen my carbine before, is demonstrating the mechanism of a sporting carbine to an appreciative circle of soldier-peasants.

Then Kećo comes and kisses me—a middle-sized man of about forty, modest and unassuming, with nothing of the fire-eater in his appearance.

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"I declare thy life suits thee," I tell him. "Thou art looking splendid."

Last year when we were here—it was a short time after his celebrated deed—he was wasted and nervous, and his hand shook so that he could scarce roll a cigarette.

"I have got used to it," he answers, smiling. "Yet they are worse now than ever. There is much money on my head," he adds proudly, "and the men of Dinoš are very poor."

We drink our coffee and prepare to go. The light is rapidly failing.

"Ye cannot go down to-night. No man takes this path at dark. Sleep here and leave at daybreak."

I refuse. Last year we slept here once, and a dozen men kept watch and ward throughout the night. The choice is the same—the chance of an ambuscade on the path down to the Zeta or a midnight alarm up here.

"Then ye must take men with ye," insists Kećo, and is immovable in this resolve.

An embrace and we part, accompanied by two talkative jovial men, whom we send back, sorely against their will, round the next bend.

Then darkness comes, and we dismount, to stumble and fall over the rock-strewn track, often losing it, and bruising our feet sorely.

Stefan slings his rifle and walks with drawn revolver in his hand. It is a weird journey, and we start at every bush. At last the lights of Podgorica twinkle over the gloomy plain, and the little Ribnica shines as a silver band in the pall-like darkness. Past the cairns erected to fallen Turkish marauders, and then the tinkle of a sheep-bell proclaims that all danger is over. The shepherd is beguiling his weary

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vigil with a pipe, on which he is playing a quaint tune.

Before the inn sits the governor, and his brow is black.

" It was the choice of two evils." I conclude my explanation, and we go in to a well-earned supper.

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Eastertide

IT is a magnificent morning late in April, and the generous sunshine has tempted me from my work. Spring is nowhere more merciful than in the Katunska of Montenegro, that "rough rock throne of Freedom," and especially in the high-lying valley of Cetinje. Spring comes suddenly in the night, turning the cold grey hills which prison-like encircle the valley into tender green. The little gardens, the parks, and the ancient trees which have witnessed the coming of the ravaging Turk, burst forth into blossom and leaf, and forgotten are the rigours of the past winter, forgotten already weeks ago, at one or two hours' distance from Cetinje. Spring has long since clothed the valley of Rijeka and the Bocche di Cattaro in verdant splendour before she suddenly remembers little Cetinje hidden away in the rocks. But then she comes quickly, bringing with her a melodious orchestra of thrushes and blackbirds, while at night she fills the air with the sweet music of the nightingale, even causing the unpoetical inhabitants of the marshes, the frogs, to yield their self-imposed task of nocturnal serenading to the new-comers.

I pass out of the little town, which ends so abruptly, and wend my way towards the end of the valley, hardly more than a quarter of an hour away. The birds are singing delightfully in the bushes of the hills and I am half tempted to plunge into the leafy bower, but I am lazy. The sun

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is hot and enervating, so I turn townwards and compromise matters by climbing one of the miniature hillocks which litter the dead level of the plain. A path leads to the summit by gentle gradients, and I seat myself on a rock for a while, gazing over the little red-roofed town.

Before me lies the house of the Crown Prince and his park to the left. I see the green-shuttered monastery and the red-brick Biljar, the only two buildings of any antiquity in the town which was twice destroyed by the relentless Turks. The simple palace of the Prince adjoins the Biljar, the house of his ancestors, and beyond cluster the irregular houses of his subjects. At the far end I see the barracks, before which exercise red-jacketed soldiers, calling back memories of far-away England. Then the houses cease and the narrow little plain runs on till the further barrier of imprisoning rocks is reached.

The clock of the monastery chimes the hour, reminding me of an appointment, and slowly I descend and traverse the park. I catch a glimpse of a red-jacketed sentry lounging at the gate of the Crown Prince's garden and again another in the simple courtyard of the Prince. I pass the Biljar and come upon the square, facing a low stone building of ugly aspect. It is the prison, and many are the times that I have visited it, talking with the prisoners. It is upon this square that they are allowed to walk for hours daily, without let or hindrance, and practically without a guard, for it is entirely unenclosed. Friends and relations come from afar, bringing gifts, and seat themselves freely amongst their unfortunate brethren. The stranger is reminded of the real character of the scene only when the clank of a chain and the shambling gait of a prisoner attracts his attention. Then he looks closer and sees many men wearing

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ponderous fetters on their ankles. Inquiry will tell him that these are the criminals of Montenegro, not, however, common thieves or rascals, but men who have defended their honour in the vendetta. They are nearly all murderers, though no such harsh term is applied to them in Montenegro, and indeed he can look in vain for a depraved type of face.

The inmates differ in no way from their countrymen at liberty outside, who would act in precisely the same manner under similar circumstances, and having avenged their honour, would cheerfully receive the punishment awarded.

I notice a group on the square and pause wonderingly. It is compact, and I see several familiar figures. There is the Chamberlain of the Prince, one of his adjutants, and several of the judges from the Supreme Court. A row of prisoners is before them, all unchained, for to-morrow is Easter, and at Eastertide the chains are all removed for the space of a week.

As I draw nearer, the group opens, and I see the Prince rise from a chair and walk slowly across the square. Here again he halts and seats himself. I know now what is the meaning of the visit. Every Easter the Prince goes to the prison and personally satisfies himself as to the justice of the sentences.

Now he is receiving the women, who inhabit the farther wing of the prison, and I draw as near to the group as I am allowed. I am angered that I have come so late, for I should dearly love to have heard the audience of the male prisoners, whose stories I mostly know.

In the centre of the little ring sits the massive figure of the Prince, clothed in the long pale blue coat of the upper classes, over which again he is wearing a sleeveless jacket,

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THE WOMEN PRISONERS.

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stiff with gold and silk embroidery. The chair looks ridiculously small under him as he leans slightly to the right, listening to the statement of a blind judge. Other judges stand close to him, and that tall young fellow in the smart red and gold uniform of the royal adjutants is also of the house of Petrović and nearly related to the Prince. His prominent nose and fine eyes remind me strongly of his cousin Prince Mirko. He catches my eye and winks at me profanely, for we battle together nightly at billiards. A dozen brawny men stand to the right and left of the royal bodyguard, and the grizzled veteran who is looking at me suspiciously is the royal standard bearer, as the gold emblem on his cap of a cross and standard combined proclaims. Opposite the Prince are a dozen women with folded hands and downcast eyes, and one by one they step forward while a clerk reads from a paper their names, crime, and sentences. Some are dismissed at once and go dejectedly away ; their chance has gone for another year.

But now a young woman is before the Prince, wearing the cap which tells one she is unmarried. The Prince turns to his advisers and puts a few short and pertinent questions. Then he turns again to the girl.

" I pardon thee," he says.

She bows deeply. She may not speak or raise her eyes, but I see her bosom heave as she turns and rushes through the waiting throng. " Pardoned," I almost hear her cry, and crossing herself repeatedly, she is heartily embraced and kissed by her late and less fortunate companions. It is too far away to hear what they are saying.

Again another woman, this time married, with the coil of hair worn crown fashion, from which descends a black cloth on to the shoulders. I just catch that she has been con-

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victed of neglect of her children. Again the Prince turns to the blind man at his side.

"How many years has she?"

"Five, lord, two of which are finished."

"Be kinder to thy children," says the Prince. "Go; thou art free."

Another has the half of her sentence remitted and likewise crosses herself and is impulsively kissed in the background. But one poor old woman I see struggling with her emotion. I know her story. It is long and sad. She is the victim of another's sin. Will she get a hearing, I wonder? because if so then will she surely regain her liberty. But another is called before her and at this moment the bells of the monastery peal out in a chime. The Prince rises from his chair and turns towards the church, crossing himself with bared head. The girl passes me laughing gleefully, saying—

"I am free, I am free," and the Chamberlain reminds the Prince that time is flying. One or two more cases and the Prince rises again. He recognizes me, and returns my salute graciously, to the consternation of the trusty standard bearer, who has watched me throughout as if I were a dangerous anarchist.

The poor old woman has not had a hearing. She sinks to the ground sobbing piteously, while around her others rejoice and sing—those that have been pardoned or have had their sentences reduced. "Do not lose hope, old woman," says the young director, patting her shoulder. "All will yet be well. I myself will see to it. Ah, you are here," he says to me, for we are friends. "No, I cannot come with you now. To-morrow is a great feast in the prison, and I must see to the meat and the wine. It is a present from the Prince."

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I look at my watch and discover that I have forgotten my appointment.

Next morning pleasant strains of music mingle in my dreams. Half waking at the unusual sound, half sleeping, I hear the solemn bars of a hymn, played by a military band, wafted through the open window.

"Christ is risen
Christ is risen indeed."

With a bound I spring from my bed to the window. It is Easter Day. Below, in the glorious sunlight of early morning stand two Montenegrins. They kiss each other thrice as they exchange their deep-toned melodious greeting. Tiny drops of dew glinting like diamonds hang from the beautiful green leaves of the trees opposite, and from all directions I hear men calling to each other the glad tidings of Easter. Harsh or shrill voices are seldom heard in Montenegro. The mountaineers have a deep-chested, full tone when they speak, that turns the Serb language—uncompromising as it looks in print—into one of the most musical languages that I know.

Hurriedly dressing, I descend into the square before the palace of Prince Nicolas. On the farther side is a tiny church; one or two trees cast a luxuriant shade upon the open space before it, and here is gathered together a vast concourse of men. Drawn up in a solid body is the battalion of recruits, who three weeks ago were tilling the ground or tending their fathers' flocks in the wild mountain pasturages beyond the naked Karst of the Katunska. Big, strapping young fellows, born soldiers, every one of them; in neat short red jackets, baggy blue breeches and white gaiters, they stand motionless, awaiting the appearance of their lord.

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From the church appears at length the well-known figure of Prince Nicolas, and like a roll of thunder burst out the greetings of the waiting men.

"Zivio, Gospodar," echoes back from the hills as that stern weather-beaten visage relaxes into a kindly smile, and with a military salute he passes on into his palace.

A brilliant staff follow him, in red and gold, blue and white, their breasts glittering with stars and decorations, the sunlight glinting on steel scabbard and revolver barrel, a sight not to be surpassed for colour at any European Imperial pageant. Amongst them I see a few men in cocked hats and sombre blue uniforms embroidered with gold, and recognize the foreign Ministers. Up the steps into the hall of the palace they troop to congratulate the Prince of Montenegro personally and break their long fast, for none have touched meat during the last week.

An air of gaiety and joy pervades the air, later in the day the *gusla* can be heard in many a house and the voices of men singing.

In the best room of every house (with the poorer classes often the only room) a table is set forth covered with a white cloth. It groans under a load of roast lamb and other meats, of wine and many kinds of spirits. Conspicuous on every table is a plate of eggs coloured red or blue, many with the legend traced in fantastic characters that "Christ is risen."

Throughout the day a constant stream of visitors comes and goes. Any one with the remotest claims of acquaintance is made as welcome as the closest relation or dearest friend. It is a season of unbounded hospitality and real feasting. It is one of the few occasions during the year that the peasants taste meat, and even the upper classes have

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observed Lent rigidly, fasting two entire weeks and many days besides.

I enter such a house. A cheery young Montenegrin whom I know well lives there with his pretty wife, who looks more charming than ever in her gala costume. Like her husband, she is wearing the long open coat of pale blue. A crimson velvet jacket beautifully embroided in gold covers her shoulders and arms, leaving the snowy under-vest of linen visible; a skirt of flowered silk and a rich silver girdle complete her tasteful attire. Her hair is coiled in a massive plait round her head and a lace mantilla falls upon her shoulders.

Petar, her handsome husband, kisses me on the lips, returning my greeting heartily. The wife kisses my hand and brings me a chair. We sit while she brings me a little of all the good things upon the table. I taste the food and drink a glass of wine to their prosperity. Then I select a coloured egg with care, testing the more pointed end on my teeth. Petar laughs delightedly.

"Thou knowest our custom," he says, and likewise chooses an egg.

I hold the egg in my hand, the pointed end upwards, while Petar taps it with his egg. Neither cracks, and then I tap Petar's egg. It cracks. Petar gives me his broken egg and chooses another with more care. Again we tap, and again his egg is broken. Other men come in and watch our harmless game with interest. My egg vanquishes one egg after another, and Petar retires from the contest.

"Thou hast a good egg," says a new comer, "but I have a better; this one," he says, drawing a purple egg from his capacious breeches' pocket, "has cracked eleven to-day."

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"Mine is better," I answer gravely, and we tap. A shout greets my victory again.

"Verily it is a hard shell," says my adversary, handing me his egg with a sigh. "That is seventeen in all that it has broken."

My pockets are bulging with cracked eggs, for it is the custom to take those captured in the fight, and I decline further contests. It reminds me of my school-boy days when we battled with chestnuts on a string. Yet in Montenegro the game is played every Easter in every house, by grizzled veterans of a hundred fights and youths proud in the possession of the rifle which proclaims them men and active members of that soldier race.

It is a trying day, and the two days which follow it. One eats and drinks from morn till night as friend and acquaintance are visited. It were better if the days of fasting followed, instead of preceding Easter.

The season has pleasant recollections for me, for I saw Montenegro for the first time at Easter. Then I arrived unknown and unfriended, a tourist knowing nothing of the land, its people, or its customs. Yet everywhere I went I was made the honoured guest of "town captain," and humble peasant alike.

It did me good after the stiffness and mistrust of Northern and Western Europe, and the impression then won has never been effaced.

On my way home I pause at the post office. Two red post-coaches are standing outside waiting for the mails for Cattaro and Podgorica. There is but one passenger, and in curiosity I draw nearer and peer inside the gloomy box-like interior. Who travels at such a season when families unite days before? It is an old woman, her face is lined and

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furrowed, yet a great happiness illumines that care-worn countenance. I start as I recognize her: it is the poor old woman who strove so piteously yesterday at the prison for a word with the Prince. I remember the sad picture of the woman sobbing on the stones and the comforting assurance of the director. He has kept his word and she is free. She is going home to her loved ones.

"Christ is risen," I say, giving her my hand through the window.

She kisses it passionately and tears of gladness choke the answer. The driver cracks his whip. As the clumsy vehicle rumbles away I catch a blessing from her lips which makes me bare my head—

"Christ is risen indeed."

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The Central Prison of Montenegro

THE hot July sun is burning down on the white court-yard of the prison with a painful glare. It is no wonder that few prisoners are about and have sought the cool of the cells; still, one or two are lying on mats in the shade, tossing restlessly. The tossing produces a melancholy sound—that of the clanking of a heavy chain—for we are inspecting the lower prison, where only the long-sentence men are kept, and they are all chained.

The prison building is on our left, a large one-storied structure standing in a great space surrounded by walls and divided into court-yards. The top floor is distinct from the lower and has its own yard on the other side.

We enter the long corridor, and the old warder runs along flinging open every door. The prisoners jump to their feet—there are two in each cell—as we pass, answering cheerily the governor's greeting. They are busy eating the midday ration, too, and thrust it from them as we enter each cell in turn.

"Seat yourselves," says the kindly governor. "Ah, God greet thee, Stano, how art thou?"

A fine-looking man rises and answers—

"May thy luck be good, Stefan; I am well, thanks be to God."

There is no shame in the men and nothing overbearing in the manner of the governor. It is more to me that they

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THE MALE PRISONERS.

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show this marked respect: the same respect that they would show me should I visit them in their wild mountain homes.

And why should they show shame? Rather they would hang their heads if they were not here, for seventy-five per cent. are imprisoned for acts of the vendetta. The governor himself must do the same deed should bad luck ever bring him to a similar pass, or lose his honour.

Yet there are others here, criminals, men who have stolen or swindled, men without honour. Pah! we do not talk of *them* in Montenegro.

Another door is opened, and two bearded men rise quickly, eyeing us suspiciously. They are evidently superior men, and both are bearded, signifying the vocation of the Church or of the learned professions, where they learn the custom in the world outside. One is immensely tall and his hair and tangled beard are black as the night. He seems familiar to me, and I look at him closely. With a smile he awaits the recognition, which comes like a flash, and he kisses me thrice.

Good Janko, ex-judge of the Montenegrin law courts, I have eaten at thy board and laughed at thy merry talk and tales of thy university life in St. Petersburg. Ah, thy head was never strong and wine excited thee, otherwise thou wouldst not be here, still awaiting trial, for nearly a year already, in chains and with the prospect of a long and uncertain imprisonment. Thou didst insult thy Prince at his own table, not understanding in thy cups that he was but teasing thee.

"Keep up thy heart, Janko; when next I visit Kolašin I will sit again with thee, and this will seem like a bad dream."

"If God wills," he says simply.

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And we pass on.

One door remains closed. The governor orders it peremptorily to be opened, but the warder whispers in his ear.

"He will not," explains the governor. "He says he knows thee. It is Lazović, the swindler, the rogue."

The name calls up a memory of Vienna, the stately Ring and the Hotel Imperial, the karavanserai of kings and princes. A tall handsome man with a blonde beard emerges from its portals, dressed in the height of fashion, and the servants doff their caps. Is he not a Petrović and brother of the Prince of Montenegro?

I too had looked at him curiously, not knowing this country in those days, and my impression was good. A fine race that breeds such men as that, I thought, and he had passed on.

The man behind the door is the same, and he owes many of my friends money. Perhaps he was one of the most daring adventurers in Europe. Every capital knows him, and in each he has acquaintances, who consider even his present punishment inadequate. And afterwards I too had met him, not knowing at the moment that it was the same man who had impressed me so in Vienna, and was delighted with his personality, his charm of manner, and his knowledge of the world.

"An ass without a face," remarks the governor, applying the strongest expression of contempt existent in the Serb language. "Our dark cells," he adds, indicating a row of dimly lit but airy dungeons, all empty.

Then we walk across the broiling yard, through another gate, to the upper prison. Here we inspect large rooms with rows of beds, round which dozens of pleasant-faced men sit.

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"May your luck be good," comes as one man from the saluting prisoners, in answer to our salutation. In vain I seek, as below, amongst the long-sentence men, for one bad face, one that shows a trace of crime stamped upon his features. Should one of them escape, the others are given their liberty and hunt their shameless comrade high and low over their native mountains, returning at the appointed day and hour with or without the fugitive.

Again I recognize many. That young giant of six feet six inches, weighing perhaps sixteen stones, is only twenty-two, and has got three years for drawing his revolver with intent to kill. See how he smiles and draws himself up to his full height and beams down upon me. Thy blood must cool, my friend, before thou art trusted out again with a loaded revolver in thy sash.

Now we visit the women in a separate building, no doors or bars between them and liberty. They giggle delightedly as I enter the long clean rooms, and the governor turns to me with a comical look of surprise. A few months ago they were still in the old prison at Cetinje, and I hasten to tell him that I have often had the pleasure of a cup of coffee at their hospitable hands, and that the *opanki* on my feet were made by that fair and blushing maiden in the corner. They never escape, for theirs are never long sentences, and escape means flight to a strange land and loss of honour in their own.

In another separate wing are the dangerous lunatics. Here each has his own cell, barely furnished. It is the most interesting visit of all.

In one sits an Albanian, his back towards the door. At his side are a dozen match boxes and a heap of tobacco. He takes no notice of us whatever, and the governor calls

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to him sharply to salute. He turns his head in our direction, touches his lips with his hand, then his forehead, and then his eyes, and we leave him still greeting us in his mad way.

"He cut the throats of his father and mother," says the governor.

Then we come to a big man with an enormous beard. He stands erect.

"Who is the stranger?" he asks proudly.

"The Prince of Wales, your Majesty," answers the governor gravely.

"I am pleased to see him," and he waves his hand to me. On the wall is a rude drawing of the head of a man. It is a mere caricature, such as little children draw on their slates. "Zar Shas"[1] is scrawled in letters on either side. Shas is his name.

Yet when he came to prison eleven years ago he was sane. He was a political agitator and sought to stir up strife amongst the subjects of the Prince, and this is the worst offence in Montenegro, for such men are seldom tried.

He has a terrible voice. When we walk down the corridor again into the yard we hear him singing. It is horrible. Then he strides down after us, his head held high, and with a majestic movement he pushes through the group surrounding us.

Another man is speaking to us.

"It is not right that the sane should be shut up with the mad," he says.

And indeed he talks coolly and intelligently, but in his eyes is a fierce look belying his words.

"Were a minister imprisoned, he would surely come to

[1] I.e. Czar or Emperor.

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THE CENTRAL PRISON.

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this department," he continues, " for he is verily more mad than I am."

The governor orders chairs to be brought, and in the shade before his house we sit and talk. A warder brings at my request a chain, such as the majority of the prisoners wear, They are terrible things to carry, weighing nearly thirty pounds.

" It is a cruel punishment," admits the governor, " but in what other land have the prisoners such a pleasant life ? "

I reflect much on these words as I wend my way through the quaint old Turkish quarter of Podgorica.

Where indeed can such contrasts of barbarity and clemency, of advanced civilization and mediæval methods be found as in the prison system of Montenegro ?

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At a Café in Podgorica

MY friend Albert is sitting pensively in the café in the billiard-room of the Hotel Europe. Personally I am feeling far from well myself, and the reason is the same in both cases. Last night we were the guests of Buto, the Turk. Seated on cushions on the floor, with little dwarfed tables before us, we had been literally feasted for nearly two hours. Many were the marvellous dishes set before us, excellently cooked, and served by Buto's servant, a youth in spotless raiment. Buto's pleasant, handsome face had beamed upon us throughout, only clouding when we half refused a course, urging us to rest awhile, " because," he said, " there is much more to come " ; and peeping through the door in the darkness outside, his pretty sisters had stolen glances at us, fleeing quickly if they thought we had seen them, to return again shyly in a few minutes. Not even veiled would Buto let them come in, for he is a strict Mussulman in some respects.

" My wife I would let you see, but my sisters, no."

Little did he think that at that very moment, behind his back, one of them was gazing at me unveiled, and blushing with a look of longing in her beautiful eyes.

Then Buto's uncle, the *bairaktar* (standard bearer), had come in, his hand full of cigarettes, and we quaffed our wine to him with many winks, for he, wicked old man, dearly

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THE CAFÉ, PODGORICA.

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loves a glass when he is alone with us. Buto too has drunk beer, and even "aqua vita," as he calls it, becoming, I grieve to say, uproariously merry afterwards, when he has visited us in our own houses. But neither will drink before the other, though both know that the other has failed, not once, but often.

"Buto, drink wine with us," we said. "Thou hast tasted pork."

It will be long ere he forgets the time when we were at Ostrog together, and he inadvertently had eaten a mouthful of ham, saying afterwards with wry face that "it was accursedly salt."

For the fifteenth time the aged bairaktar tells of his visit to the Prince at Cetinje when the Crown Prince Danilo married; how he was singled out from the guard of honour and introduced to the then Crown Prince of Italy. "See," had said Prince Nicolas to his son-in-law, "this is one of my finest old veterans, but what signify these two Turkish medals?"

"They were given me, O Gospodar, for the heads of two Montenegrins that I brought home from Špuz when I fought for the Turks."

"Tak, tak," he says laughing, disclosing his toothless gums, and with a movement of the arm he again illustrates the motion of beheading with the scimitar.

"Thou art old, Deda," said the Prince, but the bairaktar unabashed gave answer—

"Maybe, Gospodar, but I can still pull a trigger, my arm can wield the scimitar, and still I love the women."

Then the Prince and his royal son-in-law had hurriedly departed.

"How old art thou, bairaktar?"

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He shrugs his shoulders.

"Sixty-five?"

"Nay, I know not, but I think it must be more."

We are awaiting the doctor, who is wont to join us at this hour. At the marble-topped tables, on primitive chairs, sit many groups of men, half of them Albanians or Turks. The walls are bare of ornament and the balls fly off at unexpected angles from the greasy cushions of the billiard-table. Two elderly men are playing "Russian billiards" with great keenness and well content with the uneven table over which the balls audibly jolt. One is a Montenegrin with crossed scimitars and the lion insignia on his cap. He is the "Kommandir" of the Zeta, a post of no little importance where the borders are in constant uproar. Yet his good-tempered visage, which even a pair of huge moustachios does not make fierce, shows that the responsibility sits lightly upon him. His adversary, strangely like him in face and figure, is a huge Albanian in white close-fitting breeches braided in quaint patterns, black high-top boots, jaunty black and gold jacket and white fez.

In his country he was once the chief of a powerful clan. The handsome revolver in his sash is the gift of the Sultan when he formed one of the Imperial bodyguard at Constantinople. Then while home on leave the order came for the disarming of the Albanian clans. Thus was Sokol Baco, for that is his name, placed in a great dilemma, for his clan, in common with the others, refused to obey. He chose to forswear his allegiance to his sovereign rather than be held a traitor by his own people. He led the clan against the Turkish army sent to enforce the order, and was defeated, though he beheaded with his own hand two high Turkish officers. When his clan was subjugated temporarily, Sokol

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Baco was a fugitive and an outlaw; thus to-day he is an exile in Podgorica and supporter of Prince Nicolas, against whom he fought in many an action in the seventies.

All the notabilities of the town are here. There sits his worship, the Mayor, talking earnestly with portly Captain Tomo, chief of police. Poor Tomo has much to suffer at our hands, for he fails to understand that his pompous manner impresses us not one whit. When I meet him and say "Dobro jutro, Gospodin Kapetan," and the shades of evening are deepening, he pauses to explain in aggrieved tones that "jutro" means "morning." And every time I make that mistake he stops, solemnly shaking hands and explaining. Yet once I saw a man give him an impertinent answer, saying "Thou hast no sense"; "But some power," responded Tomo, and sent the man to prison for three days.

At another table I see old Vuko, who for thirty years has taught school in the rugged mountains of Kuć, his wrinkled face framed in a huge grey beard, marking him amongst this beardless assembly. It is a relic of the days when he was a priest. I know him well, for he sits at my side daily for meals and tells me the stories of the time when Voivoda Marko began the last great war alone against the Turks with no one but his trusty tribe to help him. He too battled on the slopes of Fundina—which rise so majestically at the end of this broad valley—in that famous action where the men of Kuć annihilated an overwhelming army of Turks, and inspired the whole of Montenegro to take up arms once more, and thus commenced the most successful campaign they ever undertook.

So it is with half the men who sip their coffee or their glass of raki, when they talk of the days of their youth. *Then* is the time to listen. No wonder the young men pray for war

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as the greatest blessing the Almighty can bestow. They are very jealous of their elders, and their hearts beat high with longing, causing these otherwise good-humoured giants sometimes to overflow in the direction of the border or even to quarrel amongst themselves.

"It is an hour past his time," I remark. "The doctor cannot be coming this evening."

And even at that moment I see the tall lean figure of the overworked doctor coming towards us. His district is large and "accidents" are frequent. He apologizes for his unpunctuality, but he says two men have just been brought in, one shot through the throat and the other with nine axe wounds on his head. "The former," he concludes with a seeming callousness which is far opposed to his goodness of heart, "I have packed off to the hospital in Cetinje. He is dying, and that I never allow *my* patients to do. A hopeless case and off he goes to Cetinje to die in peace."

Yet never has the doctor been called in vain, however great the distance—and it happens that he must sometimes ride ten miles into the heart of the mountains; however stormy the night, at a moment's notice he is in the saddle with his little bag stuffed with surgical appliances, chiefly for the treatment of bullet wounds.

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THE RUINS OF THE CASTLE, PODGORICA.

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The Road to Plavnica

"WE men of Zeta are ever prepared, but we are used to war," says the ragged youth leaning on his rifle. "I have fought in two border fights already."

It is a dismal marshy swamp on the banks of the broad Morača. The rain is falling heavily, and I feel angered at the "vet," who insisted on my accompanying him this afternoon. I am sitting on a stool, my feet in two inches of rich slush, a huge cotton umbrella held over my head—in spite of remonstrances—by the ragged youth, while half a dozen women in a state of *déshabille* are regarding me curiously from the doors of their hovels.

A hundred yards away, amidst a group of men, stands the vet, and he is very busy. At the risk of being held effeminate, I have steadfastly refused to come nearer and watch him at his work, which is that of dissecting a deceased cow. The ring of men suddenly falls back, and there is much laughter, swearing, and lighting of cigarettes. The movement is explained directly afterwards, and I move to another spot to windward.

"You should really come and look," says the vet, approaching me, smearing lime over his hands. "I have never seen such an extraordinarily developed——"

"It's no good," I say, "I am not in the least interested in your beastly details. Besides, I got a whiff just now."

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"That was only the first moment," explains the vet, looking pained. Why does a doctor, whether for man or beast, always think the lay must be enthusiastic and eager to learn all the details of his profession?

An old man draws near and tearfully protests at the fortnight's quarantine imposed on his stock. He is the owner of the offensive cow.

"I shall starve," he exclaims. "They are my only source of income."

The vet soothes him as best he may and calls for our horses. A few minutes later we are plashing through the flooded paths towards the high road. Two men accompany us with rifles, into which they first slip a magazine. Even boys of fourteen or fifteen receive rifles from the Government in the Zeta. Yet the valley is one of the most beautiful and fascinating spots on the face of God's fair earth. It has a beauty that grows from day to day in intensity. At first sight the visitor sees nothing but a broad valley surrounded on all sides by lofty mountains. At midday it looks like this, because the glare of the sun turns the mountains into mere colourless barriers, and the valley into a seething furnace full of strange mirages, when the hillocks seem to be floating in the air, their corners turning upwards in quaint fashion. But at eventide a painter would go mad with delight, for he alone can read those glorious colours resting on the banks of mountains that soar up into the luminous sky. Let the majesty of this view at eventide once enter the soul of a man and Podgorica will be a lodestone to him for the rest of his days.

It is so this evening as we emerge on the road to Plavnica and head our horses towards Podgorica. The rain has mercifully ceased and clouds rest in gloomy masses on the

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mountains of Albania and of the Kuć before us. From the downs of Fundina rises the base of a rainbow, but it ends abruptly. It is like a glorious memorial of the brave men who fell there in that fierce battle twenty-five years ago. I turn in my saddle and call the vet with a hasty exclamation. Strangest of contrasts, the sun is shining on the wild range behind us, turning the clouds into beds of snow, tinging them with crimson and gold. The waters of the great lake sparkle delightfully in the sunlight, and it is like turning from cruel but majestic winter to the delights of glorious summer.

We approach the bridge over the Cievna, now running broadly over a stony bed. On the near side is a ruined mill, and my thoughts turn to the reverse of this fair picture. Over this most wonderful of landscapes broods a grim spectre who exacts pitilessly his toll of human lives. It is the "Border Vendetta." They call the green sward, smooth as a billiard-table, stretching away to our right, "the Black Earth," and rightly too, for the sods are darkened with men's life-blood.

Once a prosperous miller lived on these banks, in this picturesque moss-grown mill. One night as he lay sleeping peacefully in his bed, Albanians came and shot him. They climbed on the roof and, moving the tiles away, they murdered him as he lay, with his wife at his side. His crime was that he belonged to the Zeta, that was all. We clatter over the bridge towards the han at the other end. Before it stands a pair-horsed carriage, and sitting at a table is a dignified man in the rich dress of the Montenegrin nobility. It is Spiro Popvić, governor of Podgorica and the Zeta. We join him and shake hands with the stern man beside him. They are the captains of the village districts around—men

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used to fighting and in daily danger of their lives, for the life of one of them counts as the lives of five of the common peasants. The tally of deaths is carefully kept, and when the Albanians have more to their credit, then the men of Zeta rest not till they have equalized the score and gone one better. The governor's guard is squatting on the parapet of the bridge, his gaze fixed on the plain beyond. A group of men clad in rough sheepskins stand around, and each has a rifle.

We sit and talk and laugh. No one alludes even to the existing state of affairs. It is not considered polite or even interesting. They will even tell you there is no danger, forbidding you sternly the next moment to walk across the plain alone.

There is a little church not far away. That too was sacrilegiously broken into not long ago and the sacred vessels stolen. Now the bells ring the Angelus, and the armed men bare their heads and cross themselves.

The governor signs for his carriage.

"It is getting dusk," he says to us significantly. "You are coming too."

We mount and follow.

Podgorica is not far. It lies at the end of this straight stretch of smooth road, about half an hour away. Shallow hollows border the road on either side.

"They should fill them up," remarks the vet. "It is foolish to leave them so."

We pass two heaps of grey stones piled loosely on each other. They lie between these little indentations in the flat surface. The vet glances at me interrogatively and I nod in answer. He is asking me if I know the story of these grim monuments. It happened a year ago. Albanians left the town at nightfall, ostensibly to reach their homes in the

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GIPSIES BREAKING UP THEIR CAMP.

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mountains yonder, but in reality they hid in these hollows. Four Montenegrins passed an hour later, singing lustily. Then Podgorica was startled into life by the crash of two volleys, and a few disconnected shots. The blockhouse guards turned out, but they were too late to cut off the retreat of the murderers. A little later a man with four bullets in his body staggered into the town. Another escaped, but the cairns were erected at the spots where they found the remaining two. One corpse was lying on his face, his rifle stretched out before him, his finger pressing the trigger. He had died in the moment of aiming.

The men of Zeta boast that they die hard.

Now the shades are deepening. Darkness is descending like a pall upon this valley of the shadow of death, so majestic so grand, so incomparably mysterious when the sun slowly vanishes behind the most distant pile.

It is strange that what God has made so fair men should turn into such a hell.

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To Šavnik by Night

"THE way leads through this forest. Ye cannot miss it. Besides, there are the telegraph poles. God go with ye."

And so saying, the man handed me back my carbine, which for the last hour he had obligingly carried—thereby relieving me and making himself childishly happy—and swung off with long strides across the grassy uplands to his hut.

We paused for a moment. The great valley which lay at our feet, covered with belts of beech forest, was magnificent, yet disgust was pictured on our faces, rather than the appreciation that such a scene deserved.

For a few yards we ride on, and then Stefan with a comprehensive curse dismounts. I follow suit, and for a weary hour we lead our steeds down a terribly steep path, through a wood so dense that the fast fading light fails at times even to penetrate it.

"Lucky there is some light left," is my comment as I stumble over a decayed trunk and cast a hasty glance down the abyss at the side of the track.

Steep slopes await us when we reach the open once more. The time is eight p.m., which hour should have seen us snugly ensconced for the night in the little inn at Šavnik, according to the most liberal calculation.

Stefan draws my attention to the fact that we have lost

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the telegraph poles. No matter, we spy them at the foot of a hollow and slide towards them. Our horses make the journey chiefly on their haunches. Poor beasts, they are tired, and the grass is slippery, their round flat-shod hoofs affording them no hold.

We meet a shepherd girl driving a flock of sheep, and mechanically Stefan inquires the distance to Šavnik. She is distressingly shy, but we catch the response.

"One hour." And Stefan groans.

"That means two hours at least," he grumbles, "and another accursed wood to cross."

I vouchsafe no answer, indeed I have no expressions left, and repetition is monotonous.

At Nikšić a man had said that the journey to Šavnik could be accomplished in ease within six hours. A second man had drawn me aside and called the first man a liar in my ear.

"Four or five hours at the uttermost," he had said, and urged me to tarry awhile.

Then yet another came, and with many oaths and reflections on the intelligence of the other two, told us that we must allow eight hours to reach Šavnik. He was the most plausible of all, and to him I listened, for he said—

"In the days when the Turks ruled these lands, they sent couriers, men mounted on swift horses and with relays on the way. These men did the journey in four hours, and thus do they reckon still. What signifies 'one hour' to these ignorant asses?"

I admitted its elasticity from former experiences and allowed eight hours.

Then after two hours we had inquired the distance of a wayfarer.

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"Another three," came the cheering response, and our spirits rose.

"Then eight hours is too much," we said, and laughed blithely. For what man does not rejoice on a long journey when he hears that the distance is less than he had thought? It is true that shortly afterwards another traveller had crushed us somewhat by prophesying that not even nightfall would see us in Šavnik. Yet we looked upon him as a pessimist, and paid no further heed.

Thus we had pushed on throughout the day, hearing different times from every one we asked, though all declared it near and easily to be reached. Yet the farther we rode, so did the proportionate number of hours between us and our goal increase—imperceptibly sometimes, just half an hour more, and sometimes remaining stationary even though a full hour had elapsed since last inquiring.

Well may the reader ask, "Why inquire? Why not push on regardless of the opinion of ignorant peasants?" Good reader, my excuse is my frail humanity and a longing to hear that we were not riding in a circle.

And now night had fallen upon us, and all we knew was that Šavnik lay in the ravine at our feet and not a soul and not a hut for miles.

The moon sheds a fitful light, just showing us the path, and the ghostly telegraph poles. We are on foot—it is far too dangerous to ride, and then we plunge into a forest. Still the path is broad and well-defined, showing up dully against the impenetrable gloom of the surrounding thickets. Here and there a break in the overhanging branches gives us enough light to consult our watches. Then even that is taken from us, for the fickle moon has retired for the rest of the night beyond yon mass of mountains.

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TO ŠAVNIK BY NIGHT

Heaven be praised, there are no rocks strewn along the path. It is surprisingly even and smooth for Montenegro, and I call this cheering observation to Stefan, behind whose horse I am plodding.

"If Šavnik lies in a valley why should we climb?" comes the angry response through the heavy darkness.

It is true, and I wonder with much misgiving why for some time we should have steadily climbed. A shout ahead and an abrupt halt, which jams me between the rear of the leading horse and the head of my own. I extricate myself and stumble forward to Stefan, who has fallen over some obstacle. A match discovers a rotting trunk lying across the path and we make a small détour. On again and then a full stop. The path seems to end in a blank wall of trees. No amount of matches discovers a path, and the effect of that tiny flicker of light only tends to blind us more, heightening the pall-like darkness tenfold.

We hold a council of war and consult my map and my watch. From the former we learn nothing beyond the fact that there is only one path for miles around—which we knew before—and from the latter that it lacks but two hours to midnight.

Where can this thrice-accursed Šavnik be? It must be close, perhaps within hail; and then the telegraph wire, where is that? The poles have long since disappeared and the wire hangs from tree to tree. As well seek for a pin in the utter darkness as that tiny thread above us somewhere in the trees.

"They are expecting us below," says Stefan. "Let us fire a few revolver shots."

The idea is good, and I do so. In that vast immensity of night the reports sound puny, and beyond the sudden dis-

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appearance of my horse in a thicket, they remain unanswered. After much shouting, I regain Stefan with my steed, bruised and torn with my scramble through the primeval forest in the dark.

"Let us retrace our steps till we find the wire," says Stefan, and we do so. Then once more we go forward, straining our eyes to catch a glimpse of that tantalising thread above us.

On we go, tired, hungry and cold, for the plateau lies very high, and once more the thread fades into obscurity, and not even the fallen log do we meet again. It is hopeless now, and at a break in the trees I load my carbine as a forlorn hope. Stefan gives the word that he has the horses fast and I let fly.

Crash after crash, roll after roll, comes back from the surrounding valleys and ravines. It is magnificent and weird and even awakens a comment of admiration. Stefan remains unappreciative and suggests another shot. Again that wonderful play of echo, and across the succeeding silence comes the barking of a dog. Straining in the awful stillness we hear nothing more and resign ourselves to the inevitable—a night in the woods without covering, without food, and without water.

The horses are tethered on the dew-soaked grass, and we lay ourselves down. The very silence seems full of sounds, strange and unaccountable. In my semi-stupor I swear I can detect the sounds of carriage wheels and hastily call Stefan. He too springs to a half-sitting posture, then it dawns on him where we are; and were our social positions reversed he would kill me in his wrath, for, poor fellow, he thinks I am hoaxing him.

Do we sleep? I know not. Dawn comes, and stiff,

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PRINCE MIRKO'S PALACE.

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chilled to bone, and wet, we rise. Above our head strctches that wretched wire, now dripping with the heavy dew.

We find the fallen log, our empty cartridges, and even the burnt matches. The blank wall resolves itself into the simplest of paths, and ere the sun has warmed the sides of the great ravine we are drinking coffee in pretty little Šavnik.

One more blow, bitterest of all to bear. As we prepare to leave our inn the landlady presents me with a bill. Supper and bed is written upon it and forms the largest item.

"Thou didst order it by telegraph, Gospodin, and it was ready for thee last night."

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The Ride to the Durmitor

DOWNS, rolling downs, jagged snow-tipped peaks in the distance, and that fresh keen air which blows only on the uplands, 4,500 feet above the sea level. Rich springy grass and dense forests in the valleys and hollows affording refreshing shade, while at convenient intervals the thirsty wayfarer finds rivulets of clear water, so cold that he must drink circumspectly. Such is the country north of Šavnik stretching up to the base of the mighty Durmitor.

We have left Šavnik below us, a pleasant little village of substantial houses, hidden away in a deep ravine where three tiny rivers meet, with its romantic old Turkish bridge, and its spiritual father, a white-bearded veteran, one of the heroes of the last wars. How the dear old man enjoyed our visit, and with what gusto he put away his tots of raki. He was not the first to decline further potations and, I am fully convinced, would have caroused with us until further orders.

Now we have climbed two great hills, crossed the intervening plateau, and at a wayside grave we are halted for a few minutes' rest. A party of men have attached themselves, for they are journeying our way, rough, unkempt giants, of quite a different type from the rest of the Montenegrins.

One youth has picked me out as his special prey, and for the last half hour has put me through a searching examina-

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tion, demanding particulars of my past life, my present ideas, and plans for the future. Half irritated, I have answered him and have retaliated, but not even my most unreasonable questions has he taken amiss, for I would give him an object lesson in inquisitiveness. "Art thou married?" "No, Gospodin." "Why art thou not married?" "Because, Gospodin, I have no money." "When wilt thou marry, then? Hast thou a maiden whom thou wouldst marry if thou couldst?" All he has answered as if they were the most natural questions in the world, and laughed the while.

We ride on, and the inquisition over—we have left no subject of our past, present or future lives untouched, however delicate—he develops into my cicerone.

"Here, seest thou, Gospodin, on this knoll is the grave of a Turk. The crosses at the side show the spot where his companions—Christians from Servia—were mysteriously murdered not long ago. They had lit a fire and were resting, when in their sleep robbers came and killed all three, Turk and Christian alike. Not till this day have we found the murderers or any reason for this foul deed. We buried the Serbs in the churchyard below."

A little farther and we pass another cross, with an inscription setting forth a story similar to the last. A merchant of Risano, journeying on his way, was suddenly shot down. I pause, for I know his home well, snugly hidden away up one of those majestic fiords of the lovely Bocche de Cattaro.

"A dangerous neighbourhood," I remark, not unnaturally, but the young fellow laughs and shrugs his shoulders.

After all, it is only a matter of a few human lives, nothing more.

The inhabitants of northern Montenegro lack the in-

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born courtesy of the rest of their brethren. They stare at us almost rudely as we ride through a village and draw rein at the han for milk. Yet a greeting brings a hearty response, not unmingled with surprise that we know their language.

And then the Durmitor breaks upon our longing view as we top a ridge—Montenegro's loftiest mountain: a majestic pile of earth, rocks and snow. The surrounding uplands are so high that its height is dwarfed, and I feel a sense of disappointment, but that passes as we draw ever nearer and nearer to that colossal mountain, or rather collection of mountains.

At length we reach the base of the Durmitor and begin to look anxiously for little Žabljak, our resting place for the next few days. The sun has dipped down below the mountains, and almost at the very instant we button up our coats. Later on we even dismount, for the cold is very hard to bear after the heat of the plains.

"How far to Žabljak?" hails Stefan of a peasant at work by a little cemetery on a hillock, railed in by massive timbers.

"Ye are close—half an hour," comes back the cheering answer.

A ridge is before us, in half an hour we top it, and look for the houses of the town. Another valley and another ridge meet our hungry gaze.

"God greet thee, brother. How far to Žabljak?" shouts Stefan once more.

"May your luck be good—an hour."

"Ask no more," I call angrily to Stefan, and we plod on. The second ridge is reached, and in the failing light we see—yet another covered with lofty pines. In

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silence we walk onwards, while each reads the other's thoughts. They are prayers that we may not be condemned to another night in that gloomy forest before us.

Now we have reached it and are skirting the path, which climbs obliquely up the hillside, causing us to walk fearfully the higher we ascend, for the side below us is nearly precipitous.

"Keep to the telegraph poles," I call to Stefan.

"Curse them," he answers, but I forgive him. I know he is thinking of that time near Šavnik when we sought for them in vain throughout a weary night.

Then we descend, and now darkness has enshrouded the mournful scene. Stefan halts irresolutely but I push by.

"Wilt thou sleep here and freeze?" I ask.

"I cannot see the path," he answers.

"What need, fool, when we have found the town?"

And he looks again. Before him is a ghostly house, and within a minute we are walking down a wide street of grass trodden into a multitude of paths, between weird, conical-roofed houses of wood.

It might be a village of the dead, so quiet and lifeless it appears; but no, there is a light, and at the beat of our horses' hoofs upon the turf a man appears.

"Show us the inn," I say, and the man scratches his head.

"Then take us to the house of the Kapetan," I continue, for I have that in my pocket which will compel attention.

It is an order to all those that be in authority to attend to my wishes, and I present it a few moments later to a young man, tall and thin, wearing a shield upon his tattered cap.

"Good," he answers. "Ye are my guests. Wife, bring the raki."

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Thankfully we collapse upon a wooden bench in the bare room, glad to be out of the nipping cold and at rest.

Then men come in and some call me by name.

One is bluff Kapetan Tomo from the High Court of Law, and another is a professor, both from Cetinje and old acquaintances.

"It is good that thou hast come," says Tomo. "We wanted a fourth hand at whist. After thou hast supped we will commence."

And I laugh at the incongruity of it all, for yet another man has come in, a botanist whom I once met in Prague.

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BRIDGE OVER THE ZETA.

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Crna Jesero

HIDDEN away in the heart of a pine forest, overshadowed by the mighty Durmitor, lies the "Black Lake." Thither we have walked this morning, guided by a sturdy youth through the depths of the majestic forest from little Žabljak, that most desolate yet romantic of mountain villages in the far north of Montenegro. Birds twitter gaily and blithely from the hidden recesses of the sombre green foliage, breaking the solemn silence with their music, which even our footfall on a carpet of moss and dead leaves does not disturb. And thus we threaded the wood till we found ourselves suddenly face to face with one of the most glorious mountain landscapes in the world.

Our guide leads us to a rude stone bench commanding the whole lake.

"It is the Gospodar's favourite resting-place," he says, and well we understand. Many hours has the Prince sat on this spot, gazing, as we do, at Nature in its purest form, solitude, unspoilt by mankind and undisturbed. What beautiful thoughts must have come into that poet's mind!

With a sigh of perfect contentment we let our eyes wander round the scene. Lofty pines are reflected in the limpid green depths of the unruffled water. The great mountain surrounds it on three sides, clothed with pines till vegetation ceases and the sun glares fiercely on the vast snow fields high up upon the huge pile of rugged mountain.

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Far away opposite rests a little island, floating, it would almost seem, so glassy is the water. Wild duck are circling round it in mad flight, for our guide has thoughtlessly fired his rifle a second before at a group of tiny specks resting in the lake. The report echoes and re-echoes from gorge and ravine till a battle seems to rage upon the heights.

As the last echo dies away, lo! the soft tinkling of cow bells peals musically across the water and we see little shepherd boys driving their charges down to drink from amongst the trees. Shrill voices mingle with the bells, for the boys are talking with each other across the miniature bays.

Then we strip for a swim, but the water is icy cold in spite of the mid-August sun, and when we resume our seats the guide proposes a shot at the nearest snow patch glistening above our heads on the steep sides of the "Great Bear."

"What dost thou say?" queries the youth as he fingers the sight.

"Fifteen hundred metres," I hazard.

"One hundred too much, if not more. Take my rifle and shoot at fourteen hundred," he retorts carelessly.

I aim and miss.

"It is even as I thought. Thirteen hundred metres and thou wilt hit the snow," he says, smiling.

Again the rifle crashes out and a tiny spurt of white shows how correct is his judgment of distance.

Then we shoot at swimming duck once more, and shout with delight when the water shows how near was our aim. Shooting is the Montenegrin's only real pleasure, and we have an impromptu match at a submerged stump, just discernible on the bank of the little island.

We splinter it after many shots, and strolling on we stalk

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more duck, firing at them from our leafy cover. But it is not to kill them that we shoot. It is but an excuse to hear the music of a rifle intensifying the magnificent silence around us.

Rain begins to patter through the trees, and we are now far away at the farther end of the lake, swinging ourselves along the steep banks from branch to branch when the wood is too dense to penetrate, or pushing aside the bushes when our guide would cut off a bluff.

The rain is coming down in sheets. The great drops dance a merry measure upon the surface of the lake, and the swish of the tree tops sounds pleasantly, but we are getting wet. Not that it matters much; but the guide leads us to a tree more luxuriantly leaved than its brethren, and as we squat upon the ground he gathers twigs and brushwood, enough to catch flame, and deftly he plies the little fire with ever larger sticks till we have a log fairly ablaze and we must perforce draw back from the heat.

Not so the youth. Like all Montenegrins, he seems impervious to heat and cold alike, and with his clothes nigh scorching, his fingers often in the flames as he adds more fuel, he draws a piece of lamb from his capacious breeches and roasts it before our hungry gaze.

We 'have raki and 'bread, and while the rain patters indignantly over our heads, ever and anon sending a fizzling splutter into the fire, or down our necks, we eat our feast, enjoy it as if it were served us in our far-away homes, and snap our fingers at God Pluvius.

There are no remnants of the feast, except a few crumbs remain for the birds. Tobacco tins appear, and with the first puff of the fragrant cigarettes conversation flows in easy channels.

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A temporary diversion is caused by the appearance of a snake, which comes unbidden to the feast and—the warmth. Stefan slays him and throws the still writhing body to the guide. The fearless youth turns pale and shudders, and when I twit him with his fear of a dead and harmless snake, he retorts—

"Snakes or Turks, alive or dead, I never trust."

The conversation grows more disconnected, and when I address a remark after a lengthy pause, lo! a deep snore is my only answer. Both men are sleeping soundly, and when I grow tired of the monotony and wake them, both declare they have but closed their eyes a moment.

Stefan swears with many oaths that he would never be so discourteous, but alas! he is a liar in this respect, for surely never was there a man more gifted in snatching odd moments of sleep under the strangest of circumstances than Stefan.

But it is time to go, the way is long, and we shall be wet to the skin.

Our last glimpse of the "Crna Jesero" shows us its waters lashed with rain, spurting as if under a volley of rifle bullets, and above, the clouds have covered the great mountains with an impenetrable mantle of mist.

Farewell, Black Lake, beloved of thy Poet-Prince; the elements cannot impair thy wild grandeur.

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Žabljak: The Kapetan's Wife

BROAD rolling downs on one side, scattered pines just sparsely dotting the green sward, then increasing in numbers till a dense forest stretches towards and up the sides of the Colossus of Montenegro, the Durmitor. A rude collection of houses lining a short and very wide road—if such a name can be applied to a mere grass plot trodden into a network of footpaths,—which ends abruptly with the last house, resolving into a mere thread leading over the shoulder of the mountain to far-away towns. How immeasurably distant seems everywhere else in the world as one stands in little Žabljak, Montenegro's farthest village in the north. Even the lonely line of telegraph-posts appears an incongruity as with painful straightness it leads away from the town to be speedily lost in the pine forests beyond.

It is eventide, drifting clouds are descending upon the village. Gone is the majestic mountain in a dense mist of driving clouds, drifting down upon us as if to crush the little cluster of houses at its feet. How different was the morning! —the sun shining gloriously on the great snow fields, tinging the mass of peaks with a roseate hue, softening the harsh outlines and brightening the gloom of the pines.

Then I had strolled to the little church, which stands apart from the village upon a tiny hill, past the simple square building of wood where lives the Prince when he seeks the

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solitude of Žabljak and his beloved Durmitor—a house as simple as that of his peasant subjects with but a little outhouse for his train. Round the church lie the mountaineers in their last long sleep, quaint gravestones above them, waiting till their Maker shall wake them once more. They have but exchanged the peace of the mountains for the calm of sleep, for here is no border turmoil, and men live at peace with each other. And dotted over the downs, as far as the eye can reach, stand other little hillocks fenced in with massive rails, as is even this resting-place—the cemeteries of the mountaineers who live in scattered groups.

Men of great stature are they, with rough-hewn features, gaunt and wiry. The solitude of the mountains has entered into their souls, and they move with a dignified quietness and the easy grace of hillmen. They are more curious than the Montenegrin of the border, and seem almost unfriendly in their manners. It is what I have oft heard of the men of Northern Montenegro, but I have sojourned many days in their midst, and am sorry that to-morrow I must leave them.

How they flocked into my primitive bedroom when I have sat there, watching with frank, wondering eyes as my pen flies over the paper. "And thou art writing about *us*," said one burly giant, breaking at length the awed silence, "that thy people may learn how we live and how we die?"

"How swiftly thy pen moves," remarks another. "Verily I have never seen the like. When our Kapetan writes an order his pen moves thus." And he illustrates with his horny hand that has never held a pen the movement of a man writing with painful effort.

"Hush, ye fools!" murmurs a third. "How can the English Gospodin write when we chatter so idly?"

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And in the evenings when doors are barred to keep out the biting cold of night, we have sat together playing wondrous games of cards of childlike simplicity, for rounds of raki, yet with the intentness of born gamblers; or by day we have journeyed up the mountain side to the lofty summit to gaze upon the marvellous panorama. All Montenegro lay at our feet, the Sandjak of Novibazar, nay even the distant borders of Servia, can be faintly seen, where live the kin of these men divided but by that narrow tract of land for five centuries. Still, there is not a man who does not hope one day to be re-united and form once more a mighty Serb empire. Alas, for the dream, Austria lies between the sister countries, and that is Sarajevo almost due north, where is an army corps of soldiers with batteries of mountain guns, which can follow the most intrepid hillman into his very fastnesses, hurling shells where rifles are no longer of use.

But what good in telling these simple men that the day of small countries is ended? They would not believe even if they understood. There have been sheep slaughtered in far-away glades and roasted whole, and we have sat and feasted, returning in the gloaming to the lonely village.

These ragged men have given us of their best and deemed it all too little. They would fain keep us here a month, and each day they propose new trips, to the rocky gorge of the Tara or to ancient monasteries beyond the mountain.

I ponder upon these things as I lean upon the rails of the graveyard, drawing my greatcoat tighter about me, thinking of the sweltering heat of August in the plains below, which I left a few days since. And as I retrace my steps the clouds have descended on the village. Misty figures stalk mys-

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teriously to and fro. Groups of wiry ponies stand tethered in all directions, and the faint outlines of the high conical roofs of the houses are dimly seen. Žabljak has a style of architecture of its own. Upon massive foundations of roughly hewn stone rest baulks of timber. Unlike other Montenegrin houses, all have first floors, and not a few, rude balconies. There are not more than thirty houses in all, and these are snowed up more than half the year.

We noticed great poles upon our journey across the downs, which led persistently upwards for two long days. They are the guides of these men when snow covers all paths and tracks for months together. They guide the letter-carrier on his monthly visit in the winter, and the enterprising trader who brings all the necessaries of life to these frugal villagers.

The quiet is intense. No lusty Montenegrin plays upon the *gusla* or sings of the deeds of heroes. Save from one house, whence comes the sounds of revelry, all is silent. That house I enter. It is the abode of the Kapetan, whose guest I am, and seated round a table I find the genial judge from Cetinje, sent to settle differences of crops and boundaries, a professor likewise from Cetinje, a merry soul, and a Bohemian botanist, who is revelling in the flora of the Durmitor.

In another corner sits a group of wild men of strange dress, horse dealers from Plevlje, listening open-mouthed to Stefan, who on my entrance abruptly ceases talking with a guilty look.

"What lies hast thou been telling again, O Stefan?" I ask him, for he loves to relate strange stories of our travels. He meditates an answer, but Ljubica, the Kapetan's wife, brings in a steaming bowl of stewed lamb, and with hungry shouts from the other table, I am bidden fall to. A second

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invitation is not needed, and soon our host is toying with a greasy pack of cards, placing the while a great bowl of raki at our side.

"God give thee better luck this evening," he says to me piously. "Thou didst pay for many rounds last night."

"Make coffee, Ljubica," says one of the players, some hours later.

Pretty young Ljubica—which, being interpreted, signifies Violet—looks up in surprise. It is past ten, an hour by which all Montenegrins are fast asleep after their day's labour, which has commenced long before the sun has topped the cold, snow-clad peaks.

"It is late," she murmurs, "and the fire is out."

But the man who spoke hears her not. It is her young husband, the Kapetan of the Montenegrin mountain village, and he is intent on the game.

The room is furnished in the barest manner possible: benches along two sides, a rude table, one or two stools, and in the corner opposite the door is the bar, knocked up in evident haste with untrimmed planks. On the wall behind are some shelves with a collection of bottles upon them. The sole decorations are a couple of coloured posters, both setting forth the advantages of certain cigarette papers, for the Montenegrins are inveterate cigarette smokers, and roll their own cigarettes. Both designs are so startlingly incongruous that the stranger's attention is riveted upon them alternately. The one portrays a girl in a low-necked dress, seated in a most indelicate fashion on a velvet chair, while at her elbow is a marble and gilt table; a bottle of champagne set temptingly in a pail of ice is at her feet. The second picture takes the stranger to a West Indian island, where a ravishing maiden reclines in a hammock

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amongst a grove of palms, and a young man in a beautiful striped suit sits beside her.

Involuntarily the gaze wanders to the gnarled, weather-beaten features of the inhabitants of this village, which is snowed up half the year, the other half being spent in border feuds, vendetta amongst themselves, or in tending their flocks. Great rough men, revolver ever at hand in their sashes, yet good-hearted and hospitable to strangers in their own way.

One of them thumps a card down with a mighty blow, and another mutters a curse—it is the way of card players all over the world—as Ljubica goes out into the night. The kitchen is outside the house, in a hut, and thither she proceeds with a little sigh. The night air is nipping, though this she does not seem to feel, in spite of her dress being of the thinnest material. The quaint conical roofs loom out indistinctly in the driving mist, and even a few flakes of snow are falling though it is midsummer. The rows of houses bordering the wide grass-grown street seem unreal in the semi-darkness which the moon is endeavouring in vain to dispel. Some twenty huts form the village, and then the broad street breaks up into tracks leading across the downs in various directions. Roads there are none nearer than two days' journey on foot or on horseback—it is the same for walker or rider over these mountain-paths—but the lonely telegraph-posts lend a mistaken air of civilization as they stretch away into the weird depths of a pine forest.

Ljubica has entered the miserable hut and is painfully blowing the almost cold embers into a glow upon the earthern floor. She has lit a candle, which only intensifies the gloom and blackness of the remote corners. A few pots, grimy

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and rude, hang on a chain from the smoke-blackened rafters, and a few blocks of wood used as chairs when visitors come, constitute the kitchen furniture.

The glow of the awakening flames illumines the thin features of the girl-wife, for she is little more. A year ago she was the fairest maiden in these parts, plump, with full features, yet a year of married life has made her look ten years older.

Though she is the wife of the Kapetan, or chief of the district, she must work the same as if she were the poorest peasant woman, yea, the overworked "general" of a struggling family in far-away England has an easy life compared with hers. From daybreak till night she works. She cleans the house and cooks the food, besides waiting on her husband, ready to do his slightest wish, ever ready and willing.

The duties of a mother are added to the rest, and even now the plaintive wail of her firstborn calls her to her most loved work of all.

The coffee is brewed, and she hurries back to the house with the fragrant beverage. She pours it into tiny cups and serves them on a tray to the men, who thank her not, not even with a glance. For a moment she lingers in the room, the man sleeping in a corner turns restlessly in his sleep, and then she goes up the rickety stairs to her child.

As she takes the infant to her breast a roll of thunder echoes amongst the mountain peaks, and from the room below comes the hoarse murmur of voices.

Her eyes are heavy with sleep, yet not even now can she call herself her own. Patiently, and with a look of love, she clasps the little one to her bosom.

Is she happy? Is she contented?

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I think she knows not the meaning of the words. What she is doing her mother has done before her, without a murmur and without a thought of another life. In a sense she is both happy and contented. Her husband does not beat her, neither does he abuse her. Why should he, indeed, when he finds such dog-like obedience? And few Montenegrins drink to excess.

Now she puts the little one in its cradle, and on a mattress on the floor she lays herself down beside it.

The child cries still, and mechanically she rocks the cradle with her hand. The dull thud of the rockers beats a monotonous tattoo on the floor. Then the child sleeps, and Ljubica has earned a few hours' rest.

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THE BLACK EARTH.

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A Montenegrin Mother

THE marriage ceremony has been duly solemnized. Back to the house of the youthful bridegroom have trooped the wedding guests, not with the accustomed *feu de joie* of revolver shots—that is prohibited just now for political reasons—but with much noise and broad jesting. It was an odd procession, judged by Western ideas. Not till three days have passed can the husband claim his wife, and she has been conducted to her new home by her two sponsors, under whose supervision she must remain till the days of feasting are over. Therefore has the procession been divided into two parties, that with the bridegroom taking precedence, led by a stalwart *bairaktar*, bearing aloft the Montenegrin standard. To lend distinction to Montenegrin weddings some person or persons of distinction, very often strangers to the families concerned, are invited. In most cases it is an officer of the standing army who, together with the standard-bearer, heads the procession. To-day they have captured a foreigner, though he is no stranger to these good people, and he is much gratified at the invitation. And what is more, he is an Englishman, who ranks after the Russian in the estimation of the Montenegrins. Therefore the bridegroom increases his natural swagger—that haughty swinging stride, shoulders well braced back and chin held up into the air, can be called nothing else—pulls

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the butt of his hip revolver into a more prominent position and gazes upon his fellows with frank self-consciousness.

He is a good-looking young fellow, barely eighteen, yet sturdy and apparently many years older. It is by no means an early age for these plainsmen to hurry into the bonds of wedlock, and from the time that they can carry a rifle with effect they count as men.

The sun is flaming over the peaks of the Rumija when we reach the lowly habitation, which is shared by the bridegroom's father and uncle alike, and the smell of roasting meat assails our nostrils as we in turn plunge into the mysterious depths of the common living-room.

The bride, a chubby maiden with rosy cheeks, must serve the guests to-day. To-morrow it is her husband's turn to do the honours. Very prettily she brings us the great bottle of raki; and a low table, laden with a mass of doughy indigestible cakes, is pushed before us. It is a wearying ordeal, and one more capable of testing the digestive organs than anything else in the world. Roast meat, chicken, maize bread, and the afore-mentioned cakes are thrust almost literally down the capacious throats of the guests. The bottle, be it wine or raki, circulates unceasingly; but enough—these feasts must be experienced and not described too minutely.

The company is composed of the typical swarthy men of the Zeta, not so athletic perhaps as their brethren in the mountains, yet accustomed for a score of generations, nay, more, to ceaseless border warfare. I dare wager that there is scarce a man or youth in that assembly who has not tasted blood, and some, I know, are fresh from the fight where they slew ten Albanians and wounded as many more. And that fight took place but a few days ago upon the plain

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before our very door. In that skirmish our youthful bridegroom won his spurs, and very proud he is too of his first kill.

He sees me looking at him now, and he pauses, bottle in his hand, to drink my health for the twentieth time. Then he drinks and comes to my side.

"It is poor fare, O Gospodin," he says with a frank smile, "but it is the best we can give thee."

I expostulate, and lead him outside the hut to inhale a few breaths of clear air after that smoke-laden atmosphere.

"Listen, Marko," I say, "such feasts are not for me. Nay, I mean no offence. But I must sleep awhile this night. Tell thy mother that she shall give me a blanket that I may rest for a few hours."

"But not yet," exclaims Marko in alarm. "We have scarce begun."

"Six hours already have passed, and I am tired. But one hour more I will stay with thee. Then let me sleep in a corner, lest to-morrow I am too fatigued."

"Thou dost not look so weak," responds young Marko, "but be it as thou wilt. *Thou* art master here. But canst thou sleep amidst such noise?" he asks as a burst of rough singing comes from the hut.

"Try me," I say, and he turns smilingly to call his mother. She comes, good soul, at her son's command, and her wrinkled face lights up with pride as she looks at him. The moon has illumined the plain with the clearness of day; and that picture of the young mother, so aged in appearance, listening with respect to her stalwart son's wishes, the hut behind, with its invisible but noisy occupants, and the distant rugged mountain panorama will ever stay graven on my memory.

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"In a few minutes I will be with thee," says Marko; "I go but to attend to the horses."

And again I dive into the hut.

The minutes pass, and still the bridegroom does not return. Sleep weighs ever heavier on my weary eyelids, for I have ridden far to-day, and I beckon to the mother.

"Fetch Marko, mother," I say; "I would wish him good-night."

She goes with a reverence, and I wait impatiently. In a momentary lull I almost fancy I catch the wail of a woman when she mourns her dead, but it is impossible, and I shake the drowsiness from me.

"Marko bids thee sleep." I start, for I have nodded on my stool, and it is the voice of his mother speaking in my ear.

"Where is he?" I exclaim, rubbing my eyes, for she seems strangely white and the lines deeper on her toilworn face. But her voice is as steady as ever, and I laugh at my imagination.

"Marko is called away," she says quietly. "Thou wilt see him in the morning. Sleep now, Gospodin. All is prepared, and thou art tired."

Willingly I follow her to a corner in the room and stretch myself thankfully upon a pile of sheepskins. The last I hear is the mother of Marko repeating her message to me to the noisy guests. It is nothing unusual. Every Montenegrin is a soldier, and he may be required for a spell of night duty on the near border at any moment.

The grey light of early morning is creeping through the open door as, yawning, I stagger to my feet. I have been awakened by a friendly but vigorous shake, and the nocturnal carousers are standing round the mother of Marko.

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As I join them she conducts us from the hut to the outhouse where the horses are stabled. She is leading the bride by the hand. At the rude door she pauses.

"I told ye last night that my son was called away, and that to-morrow ye would see him again. Maiden, go to thy husband. He awaits thee within."

She pushes the girl almost roughly inside and once more turns to us.

"Ye have caroused, and I have let ye. He would have wished it so."

A horror-struck voice from the hut freezes my blood.

"Marko, my husband!"

Then all is still, and I push inside.

He is lying there, a blue mark on his temple where a horse has kicked him. Upon his fair young body lies the girl unconscious. His mother leaves us for an awful minute gazing at that tragic picture, then she pushes us out.

"Go," she says, "leave him to his women."

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Black Andrija

THERE was no more unpopular man in easy-going Podgorica than Andrija Mijabović, lieutenant of militia, a black-browed, sullen young fellow, disliked even by his few associates, who, outcasts likewise, held together with that quaint tolerance of each other always found in social pariahs.

At home Andrija had an aged and infatuated mother, and strangely enough, a young wife, though how he succeeded in wooing this fair daughter of the Black Mountain was an affair veiled in mystery. The presence of these loving women at home had no influence on Andrija. He loafed, drank, and gambled from morn to night and from night to morn, not going home sometimes for days together. That was the origin of the trouble. Had these poor women let him go his way in peace, he might have drunk himself to death, been banished or imprisoned without disturbing any one in particular. Nobody took any notice of Andrija, and a goodly few scarce knew of his existence. But mother and wife judged otherwise. They formed a deputation of themselves, and waited on handsome, good-natured Spiro Vuković, the governor of Podgorica, and brigadier of the Zeta battalions, begging him to speak with Andrija and show him the wickedness of his ways.

In this manner the thing became known, for Spiro spoke of it to us and others whilst sipping our ante-prandial raki

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before the door of Lazo's inn under the shadow of the mulberry trees.

It was the hour when we were wont to gossip over the events of the day, a necessary institution in a land without the blessings, or curse, of daily newspapers—and occurrences of rare triviality assumed at times the aspect of startling news, according to the barrenness or plenitude of conversational themes. Thus it was we discussed shooting affrays on the near border, bloody deeds of the vendetta, or trifling domestic gossip of the town with much the same interest.

Besides the governor, there was the usual collection of town dignitaries. Pompous Kapetan Tomo, chief of the gendarmerie; Milos, the governor's secretary, neat and conspicuous in European clothes, an effect heightened by an enormously high collar; Marko, the mayor; the district judge, whose name I forgot, though not his cheery face; the "man" doctor, Austrian by birth, and his colleague the "horse" doctor, an Italian. A little distance away stood a gendarme (the governor's personal orderly), a keen, fearless-looking man, smoking cigarettes with a great air of restfulness and enjoyment.

A stranger to the group would have had no difficulty in recognizing the governor were he told to pick out the man in authority there, for Spiro had an unmistakable air of command under his affable exterior. When he stood up he was a head taller than any man present, and that is saying much where the average man stands five feet eleven inches in his heelless opanki.

Passing the brown hand often over his iron-grey hair, Spiro told us of the petition laid humbly before him that afternoon by the two weeping women.

"And I know not what to do," he concluded; "I cannot

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interfere as Andrija's superior, and yet I would help the poor women."

"Why not send for him unofficially and speak him fair?" suggested one. "He must at least pay respect to thy words, O Spiro."

And Spiro had said that this was the only idea which had occurred to him, and that he would do so.

Some days passed and I chanced to meet the governor strolling at midday, as was his habit, up and down the broad street before his house.

I spoke of Andrija, and Spiro's face clouded with anger.

"He did not come," he said shortly, and I wondered greatly at Andrija's impudence, for it was a case of a subaltern ignoring a request of his commanding general.

Wisely I held my peace, and we spoke awhile of other things, then I wended my way to Jovan's coffee-house.

Strangely enough, Andrija was the first man upon whom my eyes fell on entering the dingy room, sitting moodily in a corner, alone. My salutation, courteously acknowledged by the other men present, found no response from him, and somewhat purposely I seated myself at his table. A growl echoed my second greeting, and with a shrug I turned to watch the bluff Kommandir of the Zeta battling peaceably at Russian billiards with the no less genial ex-Albanian chieftain, Sokol Baco. My thoughts wandered back to those days when these grizzled veterans had fought each other in different manner upon the plain and slopes outside the town. Then these two hoary old giants had been vigorous men in their prime, and their "bags" of bleeding heads were wont to be great. Savage, pitiless war, scenes of carnage and fierce hand-to-hand fighting had been the nursery of these men—and indeed that of all the other

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onlookers, and yet it had left their hearts tender, a laugh ever lurking behind their drooping moustachios, and an open, generous hand.

No, war has certainly no brutalizing tendency, I mused, laughing in infectious unison with the great Albanian, who has beaten his partner by a clever unexpected stroke, and is slapping his thigh to the accompaniment of great roars of delight.

A man enters breathlessly.

"The house of Stefan Voinović is burning," he gasps, and vanishes again into the broiling glare outside.

With many and varied exclamations the guests break up, for a fire is a rarity in times of peace; but at the door they are pushed back by a man entering. They fall back, leaving the new comer a space in their midst. It is the governor himself.

Rapidly and lucidly he gives instructions—some little but important duty to each man of rank present, who salutes and retires promptly. Then Spiro's keen glance falls on my neighbour, who alone has not risen from his chair.

"What, Andrija," he shouts, striding swiftly to the table. "What dost thou here—and seated? Begone and call thy section together. They will be awaiting their officer at the place of muster."

The man rose slowly, and a flame shot into Spiro's eyes at the ostentatious laziness.

"Quickly!" he roared, and with a sharp cane he dealt him a light blow on the shoulders. "We will speak of this and other matters afterwards, Lieutenant Andrija."

Andrija's studied sloth of movement was gone ere the blow had fallen. Stiffly erect, he waited till the governor had concluded.

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"We will indeed speak of *this* matter afterwards, Gospodin Spiro," he spoke, and with face aflame he darted from the room.

Events moved quickly the next few hours. The fire was extinguished with no little difficulty, but the sun was still high above the rugged mountains as I bent my steps once more to the street where stood Jovan's coffee-house. As in the forenoon, Spiro Vaković was pacing to and fro, alone except for the ever-present orderly, some ten paces to the rear. We spoke together, and whilst Spiro listened with some incredulity to the stories of steam fire brigades and their men, Andrija Mijabović approached us, an evil look upon his face.

"Of what matter hast thou to speak with me, Spiro, other than that which occurred to-day, concerning which *I* shall have something to say?" he quoth with studied insolence.

As I turned to go, I saw Spiro's face darken under its tan.

"Thou dost neglect thy wife, Andrija, and I would know why thou didst not answer my summons to thee to come."

I heard no more, entering aimlessly the deserted coffee-house, for the habitués were resting and eating at their homes after the exertions of the preceding hours.

Besides, the storm now bursting had no attractions for me. Louder grew the voices of the angry men quarrelling in the sunlight, and then I heard the voice of Andrija, harsh and menacing.

"And now for the other matter, Spiro. Thou hast struck me like a dog this day. Thus I return that blow——"

And I turned, hurrying to the doorway, for I was afraid, knowing what that meant.

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Two shots had rung out before the door was reached, and this is what I saw.

Spiro reeling, his hand clutching at the revolver in his silk sash; Andrija, a smoking revolver in his hand, just lowered from the second shot; and the gendarme drawing his weapon, hurrying with great leaps to catch his master. The next instant the picture was changed, for Spiro had drawn and fired, and Andrija was badly hit. Almost simultaneously the gendarme's huge revolver crashed out, and Andrija threw up his arms, turned on his heels, and fell prone on his face.

"A good shot," murmured Spiro, an ever-widening spot of crimson on his creamy surcoat, and with a sigh he fell gently to the ground, almost bearing with him the brawny gendarme who had caught him in his arms.

Another few seconds and the street was full of armed men. The last glimpse was that of men firing bullets in a blind frenzy of wrath into the corpse of Andrija.

That same night the wife of Andrija drowned herself, and his mother was tied with ropes, a raving maniac.

Thus were the innocent punished with the guilty, because of the love borne to a villain by two faithful women.

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THE RIVER LIM.

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BORDER LIFE IN MONTENEGRO

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ON THE BORDER.

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Rumours

IT is just a year ago that I last visited a certain little town named Andrijevica, and was subjected to much disappointment. The rumours which met me by the way to-day were certainly encouraging, but then things have a knack of blowing over and settling down in an amazingly short time on the Montenegrin borders.

However, I have come to stay until "something happens," a statement which calls forth great enthusiasm, for, within five minutes of my arrival, the room which has been placed at my disposal at the local baker's has filled with old acquaintances. There is Milos, the herculean son of the Voivoda, strong as a bull, yet as ticklish as a young maiden—a failing which it is useful to know when he gets playful and will wrestle; the veteran Corporal Slavo, who went with us last year to Velika when we were surrounded by an excited mob of Albanians on the way, and who afterwards presented me with his pistol, a family heirloom; and smart young Marko, likewise a corporal, but half his comrade's age and of a boisterous disposition. He is very quiet and sedate to-day, yet I remember the last time we met—he and I had danced together, the quaint leaping dance of the Montenegrins. How the worthy borderers had laughed and applauded, and he had to be with difficulty restrained from

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firing his revolver into the ceiling of the very room in which we are now formally seated in a ring, with tobacco-tins and miniature bottles of raki gravely circulating.

There are others, too, the young Kapetan and mayor of the town, the Voivoda's orderly, the "human telegraph," and the postmaster, of whom more anon, for I catch sight of the Voivoda himself walking down the street with his adjutant. A minute later and we are shaking each other effusively by the hand, and I am led to a han, for they are convivial souls in Andrijevica, and the raki the best in the land. At the Voivoda's right hand I am lovingly pressed into a chair, and the table before us is loaded with glasses, for the guests are many. I heave a sigh of contentment, for of all the border clans the Vassović are the most sporting, splendid men, one and all. High and difficult passes cut them off from the rest of Montenegro, and the hawk-nosed Voivoda at my side is invested with nearly autocratic powers. He wields them well and judiciously; and how often by tactful diplomacy he has averted the invasion of his country by enormous hordes of savage Albanians, he alone can tell. In a sense he holds one of the most responsible posts in the Balkans, if not in Europe. Who can foretell the consequences should an army of Albanians overrun north-eastern Montenegro? and more than once it has been but a touch and go.

With a merry twinkle in his keen grey eyes, he lifts his glass. "Thou hast no business to be here just now," he says gravely; "but I bid thee welcome all the same."

"Then I shall see something," I begin; but he cuts me short.

"We do not speak of it," he says still more gravely, but his eyes twinkle the more. "To-morrow we confer with the

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Turkish governor on the frontier, and perhaps further bloodshed will be avoided."

"Thou art too official, Gospodin Voivoda," I say, and we all laugh and clink glasses. But the Kommandir and right-hand man of the Voivoda takes pity upon me. He is a soldier pure and simple, and he draws me on one side.

"Thou didst promise me last year," I say.

"I have not forgotten. Thou shalt come with my battalion, for we shall have more fighting; that I promise thee if thou hast patience and a little time."

"To-morrow, though, is a conference," I murmur.

"Mere talk," rejoins Lazo, the Kommandir (commanding officer of a battalion). "It is not against the Turks that we fight *officially*, but against the Albanians. We have grass to mow on the borders on *our* land, and this the Turks will not allow. *They* say the land is theirs, but it is not so, and we shall mow the hay. It is ready waiting for the scythe."

He speaks this last sentence grimly, pausing suggestively before he proceeds. "For days a Commission was here striving to settle this question in peace. But thou knowest the Turk—words, nothing but words; and while even the Turkish officials were with ours, the Albanians came down and fought. Too much talk is not good, and our patience is exhausted. We, the men of Vassović, will be put off no longer from that which is ours."

"Quite right, Kommandir," I answer; "the sooner the better." And the slender, grey-haired officer—grey not from age, for he cannot be more than thirty-five, but perhaps from countless border-fights—shakes himself and laughs.

"But will the Voivoda let me go with ye?" I ask suddenly.

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"Ask nothing and go; we do not speak of these things," he repeats, winking.

Evening is coming on apace, and the scene is very peaceful. Men walk up and down the only street slowly in twos and threes. At the doors of the little houses women congregate and gossip. Now a man swings along, rifle slung from shoulder, saluting smartly as he passes our table—he is from the mountains, which surround the town as a wall. A horse clatters loudly up the steep path from the river, where his rider has been watering it, sitting bare-backed and riding like a cowboy. Our glasses clink, are emptied and refilled instantly by the attentive host. Jokes, laughter, and toasts follow in confused succession, but not a word of war or of fighting—beyond a jest at my expense—for such topics are of too little interest.

It is very pleasant, and I feel as if I were in the midst of old and dear friends. Then the moon rises slowly over the ridge before us, and still we sit on, chatting of many things. Half a dozen Albanians stride past, likewise with rifle, bandolier, and revolver, taking a short cut across Montenegrin territory. It is characteristic of the Montenegrin that he lets the Albanian come and go as he pleases, opens his markets to him, does not require him to yield up his arms at the border, nor refuses him permission to travel in safety, even with a border feud in certain proximity. This is all the more remarkable when the Montenegrin would be shot down within half an hour of crossing the frontier.

For fun I put the question why they allow their enemies to come thus armed into their country.

"Are we cowards?" comes the scornful answer.

"But is it politic to show perhaps thy weakness?"

"Vassović can put ten battalions in the field, and at a

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moment's notice," says my neighbour, "besides another twelve from the mountains round Berani. This they know; what need have we for secrecy?"

"To-morrow I leave at seven o'clock," says the Voivoda, rising. The Kommandir winks at me.

"I shall be ready myself, for I contemplate riding towards the frontier," I answer.

The Voivoda smiles as he wishes me good night. "Then thou must go well armed," he says, "for our borders now are dangerous."

We part with much laughter.

"Thy supper will be spoilt," says Stefan, my servant.

"What hast thou been doing this last hour?" I ask him as we walk across the broad street. He is in an unwontedly jovial humour.

"I have cleaned and oiled our rifles, Gospodin," he answers.

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THE AVENGERS.

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Concerning a Conference

THE day promises to be hot. Even at this early hour the sun is making his presence felt in a decided manner. It is Sunday, and the women of Andrijevica, justly famed for their beauty, are looking prettier than ever in their best clothes.

I am just finishing my toilet, which would have been embarrassing to a stranger unused to the local ideas of privacy; for since Stefan threw back the shutters to intimate that it was time to rise, I have been watched by frankly curious faces. Of the four walls but one is blank, two face on the street, and the third is pierced by a window into the bakery, and by a glass door. The men I did not mind; but when my host fetched his pretty wife to see me manipulate my tooth-brush, I felt that modern civilization has its advantages. I expostulated with Stefan, who looked surprised, but chased away the men and boys.

"The women do not matter," he said, and disappeared to water the horses. The adjutant, more carefully attired than usual, beckons to me as I emerge upon the street.

"All ready?" he inquires briskly. "We start in half an hour. Thy health, and may we have luck together."

A man has appeared with a tray, and the officer has helped himself to a glass of slivović, tossing it off to his last remark. When the horses arrive I see the adjutant placing a formidable-looking bottle in his saddle-bag.

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"Ammunition," he calls to me, patting it affectionately. Then comes the Voivoda, resplendent in his surcoat of creamy white, and gold-slinged sword. We mount, and a few seconds later are clattering noisily out of Andrijevica, which slumbers like a good-natured war-dog in the warm sunshine, past the little church, where we should be to-day were it not for pressing business elsewhere. The pōp (priest) is there, and waves us a God-speed, and a handsome bearded man hurriedly greets me, for we are old friends—the insignia on his cap proclaims that he is a kapetan, his beard and long hair a priest. Then down the steep bank to the river Lim, hurrying with all speed to the mighty, far-away Danube. We splash through pools, taking short cuts across the shallow winding stream, our dismounted escort trotting nimbly ahead, and keeping there in spite of détours.

Thus we clatter, splash, and jostle till the path climbs again the high bank and between the lofty hills enclosing us in a deep ravine, through shady damson-orchards (slivo), among fields of maize and vineyards, till the ravine shows signs of opening on to a great plain.

We are already skirting the frontier. The hills across the Lim are Albania, and a lonely tower on the last spur is a blockhouse of the Turks.

"How delightfully quiet and peaceful!" I remark to the adjutant. He smiles grimly.

"Three weeks ago it looked different," he answers, waving his hand towards the opposite bank of hills. "A few hundred Arnauts were firing then into this valley. Our men were up here to the left, and soon thou wilt see what *we* did as a hint to the Turks that they should keep better order in their land."

A bugle rings out crisply and suddenly—our escort close

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in, adjusting belts and bandoliers. We pass the bugler a minute later, a Turkish soldier, standing stiffly at the attention by the side of the path. Round the next bend the fertile plain of Berani unfolds before us, and a few hundred yards ahead is drawn up a compact little body of Turkish infantry.

"The border," says the adjutant, indicating a rude post, and canters up to the Voivoda. A group of Turkish officers with little white hoods on their shoulders approaches us; we dismount, and a tall, clever-looking Turk salutes the Voivoda and shakes hands. I am presented: it is the Miralaji or military governor of Berani. His staff takes up position in line on the right flank of the guard of honour, who present arms, and I, following the Voivoda's example, shake hands with each. Then they join us, and we walk together towards an arbour. A merry little fellow addresses me in French, introducing himself as the army doctor, and arrived at the arbour, the Miralaji motions us to be seated on the divan running round the three sides. An orderly brings a low table and a big bottle. Cigarettes are presented, tiny glasses are filled from the aforesaid black bottle, and we are bidden welcome in slivović, though the Turks do not drink with us.

The ragged guard of honour marches back to the cluster of tents a little distance away, their slovenly appearance still more exaggerated by the mixture of red and white fezes in the ranks, while a disreputable-looking cut-throat mounts guard solemnly before the arbour. Then it is that I catch the eye of the adjutant, and, following its glance, I notice a blackened heap of ruins. So *that* is the hint which the men of Vassović gave to the Turks three weeks ago. It was the fortress; and a wall, still standing precariously, shows the loopholes. For an hour we sit and

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talk, sipping our slivović, accepting cigarettes continually from our attentive hosts. Not a word of the business on hand is spoken, and the conversation is light, uninteresting, and formal. I am beginning to wonder how the difficult affairs of the border will be settled, when the Voivoda and Miralaji rise and go alone for a stroll towards the lonely hill which stands like a sentinel upon the plain. I see it too is crowned with a blockhouse.

The conference does not last long, but I walk across to the han, which is filled with our escort and a crowd of Montenegrins. At least I take them to be so, for their costume is the same—even the Prince's cipher is on their caps, and they are all armed; but the adjutant tells me they live across the border and are subject to the Turks.

"In name only," he adds; "for when fighting comes, they help us. It is useful," he continues naïvely, "for thus are the Turks surrounded. They are all of Vassović, and can muster 9,000 men. They it was who set fire to the fort."

"Are not the Turks annoyed?" I ask.

The adjutant shrugs his shoulders expressively. "What are they to do?" he queries. "They are not many, and we never commence the troubles."

The two chiefs return, calm and collected, as if their talk had been about the crops—which in a sense it has been—and then a squad of soldiers appear with dishes. Round a table we squat, a huge platter is put before us, wooden spoons and napkins are placed in our laps, and all fall to out of the common dish. Some help themselves with their fingers; but as we have all carefully had our hands washed, it is not so unpleasant as it would seem.

A few mouthfuls, and the platter is deftly whirled away.

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For the moment it annoys me, for its contents were good and I am hungry; but a second later and another dish replaces it. After ten minutes I recline indolently; the remaining procession of courses have lost their interest. Ten or a dozen courses are served up within half an hour, the majority curious mixtures which defy description; but all delicate, well-cooked, and appetising. I gaze around that barren cluster of tents, but no sign can I see of a kitchen that could produce such a meal, which, after the frugality of the Montenegrin *cuisine*, was a feast fit for Lucullus.

Coffee and cigarettes follow, and then our attentive Tommies bring water to wash our hands. I do not return to the arbour, for the Voivoda and the Turk are arguing a knotty legal point, but I seek the shade of a hut, and there lay me down to ruminate on my strange surroundings. The little doctor follows me, also three Turkish officers, and we recline on blankets speedily requisitioned from the tents. Stefan, too, appears, and a brilliant thought strikes me.

"Go," I say, "to the Gospodin adjutant's horse. In a saddle-bag thou wilt find——"

But Stefan has gone—at times he is intelligent—and reappears quickly with a bottle. The Turks shake their heads sadly, if not wistfully, for have they not watched us the whole morning tasting that seductive beverage? I fill a cup, glasses we have none, and present it to the doctor.

"The Miralaji cannot see," I say softly, and the law does *not* forbid it."

The doctor looks surprised. "You have been in Turkey," he answers, and with a deprecatory gesture tosses it off.

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The ice is broken, and we spend a pleasant hour, during which Stefan is busily employed. A clatter of sabres proclaims that the conference is over, and Stefan, bulging on one side, hurries off to the horses.

"I thank thee for thy visit," says the Miralaji courteously. We bid an affectionate farewell, part more warmly still from my late companions, who look flushed, and then we canter past the guard of honour. A minute later and we are again on Montenegrin territory, and the adjutant is justly angered at finding that thieves have been at his saddle-bags.

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Death

LAUGHING and singing we had returned to-day on our way from the feast on the frontier towards Andrijevica. The generous sun heightened the beauty of the verdant hills, and it was easy to forget that the grim spectre of Death was hovering hungrily over those pleasant ridges.

We had ridden for more than an hour carelessly and light-heartedly, when a group of serious men suddenly appeared before us, standing immovably across the narrow path. They were evidently awaiting us, and the expression on their bronzed features checked jest and smile alike. The Voivoda dismounted at the first word, which I, being at the rear, did not hear, and entered a hut at the side of the path. The men trooped in after him and closed the door.

Death can make his presence felt, and as I waited in silence before that door I knew that he had claimed another victim, and slowly I too dismounted. I had not long to wait: the door opened again, and the burly form of the Voivoda pushed through. Behind him I saw a figure laid out upon the earthen floor, and then the adjutant beckoned me to enter. Cap in hand I obeyed his gesture, but, prepared as I was, my heart leapt with a sudden burst of anger.

A fair-haired boy lay stiffly at my feet, and no second glance was necessary to tell how he had met his death. His young body was riddled with bullets, the white serge

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tight-fitting suit showing only too plainly where each wound had sapped his life-blood. A typical shepherd-boy, with that rare beauty which perfect health gives to her favourites, such as the traveller can meet in hundreds on the rolling Montenegrin downs tending huge flocks of sheep—hearing him sing the war-songs of his country, full of life and spirits, breaking off at intervals to whistle shrilly to his charge. And such a boy had been foully murdered—it could be nothing else with one so young—cut off perhaps in the midst of his song.

"To-morrow I meet thee here," I heard the Voivoda say to the peasant bearing the officer's crossed swords upon his cap. "Have fifty men to accompany me, and send word that I would speak with the chief of the Albanians who have done this deed."

Then were our horses brought, and slowly we rode away. Before we reached Andrijevica I had learnt the story of the foul deed. It was, alas! only too like many similar deeds that are perpetrated yearly on the wild borders. The boy had strayed with his flocks too near the frontier, and men—Turkish soldiers they were—had hailed him roughly, telling him to go back. And the boy, with the courage of generations of heroes, had answered that so long as he was on his father's land he would go back for no one. Then shots rang out, and the boy fell, hit in seven places by cowardly bullets; Albanians came and drove away the flocks: such was the sad story which another shepherd-boy had brought to the indignant clansmen who had fetched the poor corpse away. But Death had laid his icy hand on yet another victim. Ere we had ridden another hour, came a man to us with the report of a suicide. In a tiny house, nestling up the hillside in a cluster of vines,

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lay a woman gasping out her life with a self-discharged revolver-bullet in her body. Even as we reach the house she has yielded up the ghost, maddened to the deed because she thought an incurable disease possessed her.

I have written here my own impressions: neither death affected the sturdy clansmen one whit beyond a longing for a speedy revenge in the former case. The grisly reaper has no terrors for the men of Vassović; even the father of the boy was self-contained—nay, even proud that his son had shown a brave front to those dogs of Turks. They are fatalists, one and all. "We must all die once, and a bullet is quickest, and is an honourable death." So speak the border clansmen, and thus have spoken their fathers and their fathers' fathers, counting death upon a sick-bed as unworthy of a man.

I have watched the Voivoda. There is a certain grimness in the set of his jaw, but he utters no word of his plans for the morrow. He is as good-natured as ever, and accepts with alacrity an invitation to dine with me in the evening. The meal was as boisterous as any eaten by jovial, careless men, and when my guests depart the night is well advanced.

Confused by the events of the day, heated by the potent libations, I stroll out upon the moonlit street to smoke a last cigarette. There is such an air of calm and peace upon the scene that I pass my hand wonderingly over my brow. A youth is standing in the shadow of a house telling a maiden the old, old story. She has evidently slipped out to this nocturnal rendezvous by stealth. As I approach she makes as if to fly, but the youth stays her, and he wishes the Gospodin Englishman good night with an unaffected laugh.

From the bed of the river I see a group of men, perhaps

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a dozen in all, swinging up towards the town. All have rifles, and their white garb looks ghostly in the moonshine. They come in silence, too, and swiftly. As they draw nearer I see that some are carrying a burden on their shoulders. With a little cry the girl hides behind the house, and with noiseless tread the men march by. The lover has joined me, and he doffs his cap, crossing himself mechanically.

The burden is a dead man upon a stretcher. The moon shines down on his ghastly features, and shows a great dark patch upon the canvas.

In utter silence the men stride on—we do not greet in that presence—and in another minute have turned a corner.

"That is the second in two days," says the youth; "to-morrow we shall repay."

From behind the house the girl steals back shyly, and I leave them to continue their sweet love-making undisturbed by that grim procession. Yet to-morrow it may be the fate of the youth, who has already forgotten that there is a to-morrow. I return to the main street. It is quite deserted save for the gendarme, who is patrolling thoughtfully and slowly, rifle upon his shoulder and cigarette between his lips.

"We have but a few hours' sleep," says Stefan, as he pulls off my boots. "At dawn we must creep out of the town before the Voivoda, else he may stop us. A guide will meet us at the ford. I have filled thy bandolier."

Five minutes later and Stefan is snoring loudly. Sleep does not come so easily to me to-night, but when it does, I dream of that ghostly procession which passes noiselessly and swiftly and in silence, bearing in its midst a man with face upturned towards the gentle moon.

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Revenge

ALL was still this morning at dawn when we stole out of Andrijevica. The night gendarme was the only person we met, and he winked appreciatively as we walked our horses down the street. Now we are resting beside the noisy Lim, our horses grazing contentedly on the rich grass, and Stefan produces from his capacious breeches pocket a bottle of fresh milk. Our Protenes munched—what a godsend those biscuits proved at times!—we have lit cigarettes, and Stefan is lazily throwing pebbles into the stream. A little way up the hillside is a mutilated house. Its appearance is so weird that I stroll towards it. A man is performing very perfunctory ablutions before the door, washing with a tiny ladle of water the heavy sleep from his eyes.

"God protect thee!" I call, and he, shaking the drops from his face, bids me welcome. His house is literally cut in half as with a giant knife. Seeing my inquiring gaze his frank face clouds in anger.

"Who has done this thing?" I ask.

"My brother—God curse him!" answers the man gruffly.

"Tell me," I continue; "and if thou hast a cup of coffee ready, I will drink it."

The surly look vanishes for one of pleasure. The true mountaineer delights in hospitality, and he leads me into the half-ruined cottage, to the common living-room, which is roughly fenced with logs at its mutilated end. A woman rises to kiss my hand, and deftly prepares my coffee, while

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her husband helps himself to a pinch of tobacco from my tin.

"Thou knowest the law that when a man dies his goods are equally divided between his sons?" he begins abruptly. I nod. "This was the house of my father, and when he died my brother and I were his sole inheritors. Now, my brother coveted this house for his own, but I, as the elder, have the right to live in it, and I did make him a fair offer in money and in cattle instead of the half of the house. This he would not take, even though the Kapetan adjudged the value of his half, and I was willing to pay. He is a wicked man, and had hated me, his own brother, for years. His half he would have and nothing else, and as I would not suffer him to live with me, he came one day when I was absent and cut the house even as thou seest it, burning in a huge fire that which was legally his."

"Hast thou no redress?" I ask.

"None," he answers gloomily. "It was his, and he took it, but some day——" and he pauses significantly.

I am glad when Stefan comes for me with the news that our guide has come, and that we should be moving. I bid farewell, and go forth from the outraged brother's house with feelings of relief. The company of a peasant with a grievance is in no land to be desired. The guide salutes smartly, but he is not alone. A gendarme has accompanied him. I know him—he is one of the Voivoda's most trusted men.

"Art sent to bring me back?" I ask sharply.

"Nay, Gospodin," he answers, his face wreathed in smiles; "but I am sent that thou mayest witness all in safety and from a good point of vantage. This, though, is only for *thy* ear."

I mentally thank the good nature of the Voivoda, and we start upon our journey. We strike obliquely across the

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THE AUSTRIAN THREAT.

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hills, and in an hour we see a small body of men marching loosely along the valley at our feet. There are mounted men amongst them, in whom I recognize the Voivoda and his adjutant. At the neck of the valley we await them.

The Voivoda canters ahead to meet me with a cheery "Good-morning." He checks my thanks, for, as he says, it may be only a talk. "We are very few," he remarks with a glance at the little body of men, who now halt around us. leaning upon their rifles, "and they will be there perhaps in thousands."

"Is it wise to face so many with so small a force?" I hazard, but the Voivoda smiles craftily.

"They are enough," he says. "I know each man from childhood; besides, a larger force would only precipitate matters." Again that smile steals over his rugged face and I am perplexed.

"May I ride with thee?" I ask, smothering my inquisitiveness, and he nods.

"Thou art now under my command," he says, laughing, and makes his old joke again of an Anglo-Montenegrin alliance.

At a curt order a score of men detach themselves, and at a long swinging double disappear up the wooded slopes. There are but thirty men left with us, and these, I notice, glance often at their loaded magazines. A subdued eagerness shows itself in every face, and I feel my heart beating faster as I unsling my carbine.

We halt at the edge of a wood, and at our feet stretches a small plain. Under its cover we dismount, and another glance shows me that of our remaining thirty men, now but the half are there. No orders are given, each man has obviously received his instructions hours ago. Beyond the plain is a scattered forest, and with my field glasses I fancy

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I can detect white-clad figures moving restlessly amongst the trees. The Voivoda moves at length from the sheltering wood, and I would follow, when the gendarme touches my arm.

"Thou art to stop with me, Gospodin," he says, and, noticing my half-angered look, he adds, "Thou wilt see everything. Look! but a dozen men go with the Voivoda; the rest are here."

A stone projects from the slope, which falls away from the wood, and upon it stands the Voivoda. His orderly gives a long hail, which echoes across the valley, and then the little group waits in silence. An answer soon comes, but, unpractised in the art of long-distance talking, I can distinguish no word. It is the beginning of the conference, for, as my guide informs me, it was at this place that the shepherd-boy was murdered. He points me out the block-house, from which I now see soldiers emerging, and little by little hundreds of Albanians come out fearlessly into the open.

It is a wonderful sight. To the right and left almost precipitous mountains form a neck of the intervening plain, making an ideal spot to combat a treacherous flank-attack if such should be planned. The Voivoda uses his orderly as a mouthpiece, and he is answered by a knot of men some 500 yards away. Nearer they do not come.

"What says the Voivoda?" I ask impatiently.

"He is demanding that the sheep be returned, and that the men who shot the boy should be given him. They answer that they know not who has stolen the sheep, the liars, and that the nizams (Turkish regulars) fired, not they. It is not true, for we found three Martini bullets in the body. Listen; the Voivoda is saying so. Now they answer that one of their clan was shot three days ago, and it was the revenge for him. Ah! now they are insolent. They know

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but fifty men are with us, for their spies have watched us doubtless all the way."

"But what do they say?" again I demanded.

"I am listening, Gospodin; but such long talking is slow. Ah, but they shall repent these words. They answer that so will all Montenegrins be treated who graze their sheep on the border pasturages. See, the Voivoda is angry!"

"Then we will teach ye a lesson," I myself hear, and the Voivoda turns to retrace his steps.

A puff of smoke in the distance, and one of the Montenegrins near the Voivoda falls heavily to the ground. He is picked up by his comrades, and, without hurrying his step, the Voivoda raises his hand. Rifles crackle all around me, and in another second the Voivoda has reached the wood, the bullets chipping the branches in a perfect hail around him. My gendarme pulls me down behind a rock. Our arrangements are perfect—the fifty men are spread at intervals throughout the length of the wood, and the superiority of their magazine fire over the breechloaders of the Albanians is quickly apparent.

"Watch the nizams," shouts the gendarme. He too is firing.

They are scuttling like rabbits to their blockhouse. Three fall before they reach it, and as I hastily sweep the ground with my glasses, I see many figures, some motionless, others writhing on the grass. It is over in a few minutes, and not a soul is to be seen, though a rattle of rifle-fire comes from the opposite wood.

"It is good," says my guard, snapping the lock of his rifle, preparatory to reloading the magazine. "They have paid tenfold. Let us now go, and quickly. Yes, it is all finished. Listen, our men fire no more. Why should *we* waste good cartridges on trees? Come; it is the Voivoda's order."

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And hurriedly we retrace our steps to the horses, which Stefan is holding, blind rage upon his face that he should have been debarred from the fight. We mount and ride as quickly as our guide can trot, which is a good pace. A quarter of an hour later and we charge into the arms of the adjutant, and to the right and left stand hundreds of Montenegrins. I looked surprised.

"My battalion," laughs the adjutant, "in case they follow, which they will not do if I know the cowardly rascals."

Now, an Albanian is not cowardly; but I let that pass, for I know the clan we have just fought. They are the Clementi, and once I spent a happy time in their midst—but that is another story.

Then the men of the ambuscade double in, looking extremely happy, and lastly the Voivoda. He greets me with a brisk nod, and asks me if I am satisfied.

"So I hope are the Albanians," I say, and the answer calls forth a hoarse chorus of laughter.

"Now let us get back to dinner," remarks the Voivoda. "I love not such early hours as we have kept this morning. And yesterday was a heavy day for one of my years."

The waiting battalion salutes us as we pass through their ranks, and the adjutant bids me *au revoir*.

"Thou didst know that the Albanians would only come out if thy party was so small?" I query.

"Yes," he answers; "thou seest now why we do not fear spies."

"And the battalion followed us in the rear?"

"Exactly," answers the Voivoda, lighting a cigarette.

I ponder much on the wiles of the guileless Montenegrin as I ride somewhat thoughtfully by his side.

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Parting Shots

"WE are certain to have more fighting. *I* say it, who know the borders since my childhood and, I repeat, our men will mow their grass even if ten thousand Albanians are there to stop them. Do not hurry away just when everything looks so promising."

It is the adjutant pleading with me to stay at least another week; and force of circumstances has compelled me to declare that to-morrow I must leave the Vassović for more peaceful regions.

We are sitting, as is our wont every evening, round a little table before the han, with the inevitable bottle of raki before us. The street is nearly deserted, and quiet reigns supreme. It is always thus in Montenegro—such vivid contrasts that one is ever inclined to pinch oneself to obtain evidence that it is not a dream. And now the soft moonlight, the quaint rustic houses, the distant gurgle of the river, and the musical voices of my companions all go to make up a scene of rural peace and beauty, far away from the turmoil of the world, such as can be found in an Alpine village or a North-country hamlet. Then it is that I pinch myself and see that the men around me are clad in martial garb, with revolvers in their sashes. Their talk is of bloodshed, and the figure walking slowly down the street has a rifle over his shoulder.

"Thou saidst that thou wouldst go once with me to the

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border pasturages," says a dark man of athletic build in reproachful tones.

"That was before I knew thee, O Telegraf," I respond amidst a chorus of laughter; for he that spoke is the champion courier of Montenegro, so famed throughout the land for his speed that he has been nicknamed "the human telegraph." During the last great war he bore messages for the Gospodar from one end of the country to the other, establishing records that never will be broken.

"I would go slowly," answers the Telegraf, though with a gratified smile—he is justly proud of his reputation.

"What *thou* callest slow, O Milotin, is for strangers still too fast," I answer; "not till thou art lamed will I go with thee."

"Goest thou by the Kućki Kom?" asks another.

"Yes," I answer, "for I have many friends there with their flocks."

"And when wilt thou return to us? Next year?"

"I know not, my brothers," I say with a heavy heart, for I love these men. "Perhaps next year, perhaps never again. I am bound for other lands, and Montenegro is far away. One thing only would bring me quickly, and that is war."

"Ah," sighs the adjutant dismally, "when will that be? Now it is so difficult. It is all politics, politics, men talking with each other in distant cities, mapping out our fates with pens on paper. We, the smaller nations, are but pawns upon the great chess-board."

A gloom settles upon these sturdy warriors, chafing under the restraining influence of the Great Powers; no longer able to cut up a Turkish army, raid an adjoining clan or sack a fortress, for every move is telegraphed to Vienna, St. Peters-

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burg and Constantinople ere it be scarcely conceived in the warlike brains of these soldier children. Verily, it was better in the older days, when Europe cared nothing and knew less what the sons of the Black Mountain did or would do. And the young men chafe when their elders tell of those glorious times, and their hearts beat wildly as they listen to the *guslar*, singing of heroes and bloody battles.

One of the men begins such a song, chanting half under his breath. The others move restlessly, until they too join in, and the soul-inspiring words roll out in gathering volume till the burgher on night duty comes to remind them of the law which forbids singing after dark.

"Let them sing," I say. "It is my last evening and *I* will bear the blame."

"Thou knowest that *thou* canst not be punished," says the adjutant. "Nay, the law must be obeyed."

We part for the night. A few hours pass and I am again upon the street shaking these true men by the hand. They bestow upon me the kiss of brotherhood, and sorrowfully I walk my horse up the steep path which leads to the giant Kom. There is a chorus of revolver shots as I dive into the wood, more eloquent at parting than words, and I replace too my smoking pistol in the holster, wondering if ever I shall see those honest, sun-burnt faces again or hear the crack of rifles in anger on those turbulent borders.

On we ride, up the spurs of the mountain: soon the valley of the Lim stretches out behind us as we halt to breathe the sturdy little horses, and far beyond lies the plain of Berani. To our right, above a medley of hills and valleys, rises the barrier ridge of the Moraća, a day and a half's ride from here, and on our left the mountain fastnesses of Albania. Soon we are under the shadow of the Kom, precipitous and

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barren, clothed in dense black forests till the naked rocks rise sheer above our heads.

We are still an hour from our destination when we hear shots echoing fantastically along the ravines at our feet—the ravines which separate us from the Albanians. The young Kommandir who is riding with us checks his song abruptly, and the others hastily unsling their rifles—there are several men riding with us who have been to Andrijevica for provisions, thus constituting the escort which otherwise I should have been bound to take.

"It *may* be nothing," remarks the Kommandir carelessly. "But rifle fire in *these* parts and at this time usually means but one thing. Ah! It *is* so," he adds as a regular volley rings out. "Let us ride quickly."

There is no need for the last remark. At the imminent risk of our necks we urge our steeds into an unwonted canter.

It is ticklish work, riding hard along narrow paths with a drop of a few hundred feet beside us. Still those reports, which sound ever nearer, are an incentive which even communicates itself to our horses, and soon the huts of Carina show themselves as we break out from the forest. Here it was that last year we spent the night in the then deserted shepherds' village, keeping a weary vigil lest our advent should have been witnessed by marauding bands.

To-day there is no mistake about the meaning of those reports. A battle royal is in full swing as we, now dismounted and proceeding more circumspectly, approach that scene of wonderful mountain grandeur. Behind a rock we leave our horses; and in open order we work down towards the village, where not a soul is to be seen. The women and children are cowering inside the substantial stone-walled

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huts and the men are likewise invisible. It is a weird picture —this crackling of unseen rifles—but opposite, on the great cliffs overhanging the intervening ravine, we can see the white puffs of the Albanian Martinis. And they too have seen us, for the bullets soon come "zipping" around us, driving us to take speedy cover, of which there is luckily plenty, excepting only the young Kommandir, who walks towards my sheltering stone and coolly borrows my field-glasses. I hear a bullet strike the stone as he surveys the scene, and then he lies down, aiming long and carefully.

But the reports of the Montenegrins are getting more distant. They are obviously working down the ravine and up the other side. Soon the puffs opposite dwindle in number, and now I see faint blue rings creeping up where formerly the heavier smoke of the old-fashioned breechloaders was to be seen.

It is a fascinating spectacle, and I gaze as one enthralled, until I hear a bugle call and awake to find myself alone and with a ravenous appetite.

Somewhat ashamed, I rise and walk toward the village. Men are coming in by driblets, and the women appear at the low doorways. Now and then a shot still rings out, but the pauses grow longer, until the accustomed peace reigns once more supreme over the Alpine pasturages.

Friends arrive, chuckling gleefully, and I am invited to a much-needed repast. Seated round a wood fire, I pinch myself again most vigorously.

"They fired at us as we drove our flocks to yonder grazing ground," says one who is cleaning his rifle. "They said they would, but they have paid for their insolence. I myself shot two. I saw them fall."

"And I shot one too, father," says a boy of fifteen with a

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happy smile. "I fired at his smoke, perhaps five shots"—here he counts his cartridges—"no, six, it was, and then he tumbled into the bushes at the side."

"*Six* cartridges, my son," says his father reprovingly. "That is many, and they are dear. To-morrow thou must go to the Voivoda and buy more."

Montenegrins do not waste ammunition needlessly.

The boy's face clouds momentarily, but it clears again as he repeats, "I saw him fall into the bushes."

"And ye?" I ask. "How many have ye lost."

"We know not yet," says the man who is standing in the doorway. "Perhaps two. They are looking for them now in the forest. *They* do not shoot as straight as we. Ah, poor Milos, and he just married."

I follow him to the door. They are carrying the form of a handsome youth still in his teens upon a stretcher of rifles. A woman begins to wail horribly—the death song. I shudder.

"A reckless youth was Milos, but very brave," says the man at my side, crossing himself.

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"Ups and Downs"

I ONCE described a journey on foot over one of the most villainous paths that can be found in the world. Now I propose to take my readers a similar tour, with the difference that horses are with the party. Mark me, I say horses *with* the party, and I will add that they are saddled and in a fit state to be ridden; furthermore, that they are steeds born and bred to such paths and considered absolutely reliable even with a precipice of several hundred feet at our side. Montenegrins ride these animals at such ticklish places, disdaining to dismount, that fatal accidents are not at all infrequent. Strangers from far lands invariably walk, and leave their horses to tumble over by themselves—at least, they will adopt this less showy method after their horse has slipped *once* on one of these afore-mentioned shelving paths. It is an odd thing though, that a riderless pony—there are few horses in Montenegro, the majority being of the small mountain breed—never stumbles, be he ever so heavily laden, and he has an unconquerable desire to walk on the extreme edge of the path farthest away from the "safe side." In addition to this he has a dislike to being guided by the bridle, having accustomed himself to independence of movement while forming one of a string of pack-horses traversing the mountain tracks where roads are not. Also he prefers to go in single file, even where the path broadens out very occasionally, and his rider, tired of con-

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versing with a crooked neck, would urge him alongside his companions. All these little peculiarities the stranger will learn in the first hour.

It is five a.m., in a town on the north-eastern borders, and we are going back to comparative civilization, by which is understood a town possessing a good road communication with the rest of the world. Between us and Podgorica lies a mountainous country, with some of the finest scenery in Europe, and we have asked to be taken the shortest way. It is a foolish request, but we are human, when to err, we are told, is excusable. Also, we are in a hurry, and a difference of six hours or so has to be reckoned with. Now this is utter foolishness, for nowhere can the truth of the time-worn axiom that more haste means less speed be more effectively rubbed in than in the land of the Black Mountain.

Consequently, we have arranged to leave at five, have got up at four, and shall eventually start about six. Montenegrins are not abnormally lazy, it is simply that they have no sense of time beyond sunrise and sunset, also from the position of the sun they can calculate roughly that it is about noon. As for the intervening hours, they are a mere detail, though they cheerfully acquiesce, as was the case last night, that we should start at five sharp.

Thus we stand at five a.m., booted and spurred (the latter expression is merely used metaphorically), with revolver on thigh, an objectionable bandolier of fifty cartridges round our waist, and a carbine slung on our back. This formidable armament is necessary for many reasons, partly out of deference to the customs of the country, partly because one never knows quite what may happen, be it a strolling band of Albanians, or a stray bear or wolf in the gloomy primeval forests, and lastly, we shall certainly be challenged to an

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A MONTENEGRIN HOTEL.

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impromptu shooting match on the way, by sporting shepherds.

We have secured a glass or two of hot milk for breakfast as a special favour, because there is only one cow in the neighbourhood, the rest being in the mountain grazing grounds. This, and a couple of hard-boiled eggs constitute a meal preparatory to a journey where a couple of good steaks would be more serviceable.

Then we start, and dismount again almost immediately, for there is a hill to be climbed, which brings us thoroughly limp and exhausted to a grand plateau. There is the awe-inspiring Kom before us, over whose spurs our path will lead. Steadily we climb ever nearer to that imposing pile of snow-capped grandeur, and our spirits rise in company. It is gloriously exhilarating, and our guides troll forth martial songs in their deep and powerful voices.

The base of the mountain is clothed in great beech forests, and very soon we are in their midst. We recognize old landmarks, for last year we shot all through these woods, and this was the spot where Stefan hit a deer with a snap shot from his revolver. The path narrows and ever deeper grow the ravines on our side. Here is a very nasty bit, with a shelving precipice several hundred feet deep. We are debating in our minds if it were not better to walk, but a false shame holds us back. Are not the others riding as carelessly as ever, with loose reins and light talk? It is kind of our servant Stefan to remind us that here one of our companions last year nearly fell over, horse and all. Bah! no matter, let us trust to luck. Half way across, the expected happens: we are on our knees, fortunately on the high bank, and our horse is half over the precipice and slipping fast. Mechanically we grasp his headstall, and still half-

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sitting, give him just that help which brings him up, all trembling and sweating, to the path once more. That is luck, and if our nerves are good enough, we light a cigarette. The Montenegrins will then murmur their approval, for they love carelessness. All the same, we walk for the next half hour.

When the forest ceases we find ourselves on a shoulder of the Kom and in the midst of a shepherds' summer village. A hail brings a shy maiden, and she trips nimbly away to fulfil our wishes. When she returns she carries a mighty bowl of milk, and wooden ladles, and, seated on the rich sward, we make short work of its contents.

Tempting as it is we cannot stay long, and, crossing the ridge, we plunge once more into the depths of a forest. Down we go, on foot—it is far too steep and rocky to ride—into, it would seem, the very bowels of the earth. It is heart-breaking work, for we know that the height which we have just so painfully attained is being lost, and is all to be done over again. Up the second spur we go, riding now from fatigue, but it is very nearly as tiring as walking, for we must clutch firmly the mane of our horse, and even then our saddle slips ever farther on to the rump, and we picture ourselves sliding off backwards down that terrible path.

Another hour and we are on the second spur, looking across the ravine we have just crossed, and with the snow-fields of the Kom stretching down to our feet. The short grass is so slippery that again we are compelled to walk, and here it is that our tempers wear to shreds, for we ourselves can hardly stand, let alone climb, on that accursed grass.

There is no path and no track, and we are assailed with wild thoughts that our guides are fooling us. But no, they

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declare with many oaths that this is indeed the shortest way and that "soon the path (!) will be better." *That* they always say. No matter, the ridge is climbed, and we slide down the other side with many prayers, bringing with us avalanches of loose stones.

At a tiny rivulet we halt, for our watches tell us that it is noon, a fact our appetites have proclaimed for some time previously so strongly that we have doubted even our most trusted chronometer.

We rend a tough chicken in twain, munch some stale bread, and drink water at some trouble, for we have but one very small wineglass with us. The post-prandial repose we allow ourselves for digestive reasons, or, to be more correct, to rest our horses, is agreeably disposed of in rifle competition with some strolling shepherds, and at judging distance by firing at the snow patches before us. The scenery is also all-engrossing, and we enjoy it to the full, because it is only at such moments that it can be appreciated. No one can take in the beauties of nature properly if he is riding at the risk of his neck, or gasping up an angle usually given to the roof of a house.

The midday hour passed, we saddle up and enjoy an hour's riding, during which we can occasionally throw a hasty glance at the surrounding Alpine panorama. We ride along the top of the ridge; below us on either side are valleys thickly wooded, and all around us rises chain after chain of rugged peaks. We pass several little graveyards, some of the mounds quite fresh, for here there are no churches, and the shepherd whom sickness or a bullet lays low is buried in the holiest of all God's churchyards, in the solitude of those glorious mountains. Filled with such thoughts we have approached a spot where the path has narrowed once more, and Stefan,

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our servant, who is leading, has paused irresolutely. Even he hesitates to ride farther, and he suggests that we too had better dismount. We do so without argument, though we have but a spare foot between us and a precipice of at least 2,000 feet, while the mountain rises sheer above us. We even break into a cold sweat as we cautiously swing out of the saddle lest the stirrup leather should give or the horse not hold still. Then we walk along that path with an absurd desire to lean inwards, though we are by no means unused to mountaineering.

But even this beautiful horror comes to an end, and we are in the forest which, our guide tells us, leads to the valley of the Tara. Once below, the way is good and easy to travel. With smiling faces, ignoring painful toes, we stride downwards; but it is the curse of Montenegrin paths that they never can be consistent. They are as perverse as human nature. The wood is so dense that we cannot see even the heavens, but we are calculating that the bottom cannot be far away, when we catch a glimpse of our path suddenly soaring upwards as it were to the very sky. It is exasperating. It is also four o'clock, by which hour we should be comfortably seated in the han in the valley, enjoying coffee, with the satisfying knowledge that the worst of our journey is over. Luckily we can ride, for the ponies climb better than they can descend, and now we come to the most striking feature of the whole day's tour. Suddenly, without any warning, we emerge on the hill-top, clear of the trees, and find ourselves gasping with sheer giddiness. It is literally the summit, about two square yards in size, and the sensation is as if we were standing on an inverted egg, with yawning abysses on all sides. We cannot see the bottom, only empty giddiness, and far away a sea of tree tops. We

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waste no time, but dive into the merciful forest screen and for the next hour walk almost in silence. The little that is said is monosyllabic, and takes the nature of ejaculations. So steep is the descent that the saddles slip over the horses' necks, and Stefan is in a state bordering on mania as he for the fiftieth time adjusts them.

We will not recall this picture. It is forgotten as soon as the welcome han is reached.

The remaining four hours of level riding are a recreation, tired as we are, as in bright moonshine and at nine o'clock we draw rein before the comfortable inn at Lijeva Rijeka.

The only disturbing thought which assails us as we quaff our still warm sheep's milk is the ten hours' journey to-morrow, which must be done on foot, over a mountain path paved with sharp stones. An examination of the soles of our boots intimates that this will not prove a pleasurable experience, and—how that beggar Stefan snores!

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ALBANIA

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Introductory

I FRANKLY admit that I was prejudiced against the Albanians before I undertook the little trip which is described in the following pages. Rumour hath given them a name for treachery and bloodshed, though it is fair to state that their old enemies and neighbours, the Montenegrins, are the foremost calumniators. I went amongst them somewhat in fear and trembling. I left them with the firm intention to go again. Yet it is not an experience that I can recommend to every one. It is dangerous to travel in Albania, of that there is no doubt, and it is imperative to prepare for such a tour by a sojourn of at least a few weeks on, or in the vicinity of, their borders. Another important factor is to be an Englishman. To explain.

Albanians are constantly visiting Montenegro and other countries near their borders as horse-dealers or merchants. The former are most useful men to know, for they come often with their troops of horses from the dangerous regions round Ipek, and travel long distances. Such a man speedily discovers if you are a political agent or a sportsman pure and simple. A report from him will do more to assure the safety of a journey into the wildest parts of Albania than a guard of fifty nizams. Then the Albanians by no means lack intelligence, and they are perfectly aware of the political intrigues of the Continental Powers, particularly of Russia, Austria, and Italy. Germany is reckoned with

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Austria because of the language, and France has lately mixed herself up with the affairs of the great clan of the Miriditi.

Thus England is the only Great Power left who has never, to their knowledge, interfered in any way with Albania. Therefore an Englishman may travel with least risk of any.

Best of all is to travel with a Franciscan friar. It is what I did. Of course, he is not always available, but every clan in the north of Albania is Roman Catholic, and each has its own spiritual chief as well.

My friend, Padre Giulio, is the priest of the famous clan of Zatrijebać, or in Albanian, Trijepsi, who, though under Montenegrin rule, are as full-blooded Albanians as any other clan living across the border. In dress, customs, and language, they are Albanians to the core, yet they are loyal subjects of Prince Nicolas, though few speak the Serb language.

Padre Giulio had invited me long ago to travel with him in Albania, and in particular to journey in his company to Selce, to assist in the celebration of the annual festival of San Stefano, in the heart of the wild mountains belonging to the clan of Clementi. After Gusinje, no clan has a worse name in Montenegro than the Clementi. They are in perpetual feud with the sturdy Vassović clan, and many of the border skirmishes between these ancient foes I have witnessed from the Montenegrin side.

I made notes throughout my trip, and now I am able to fill them out into readable form. As I glance through the hastily scribbled lines I see those savage figures again, round whose fires I sat as honoured guest. The rugged mountains rise up and enclose the scene, and by my side sits the slender friar, talking in his muscial Italian, and with all the elo-

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UPS AND DOWNS.

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quence of his race, for he is a Neapolitan, an erstwhile student of medicine and philosophy, and once the bearer of a noble name.

Cows low, lambs and goats bleat in the keen mountain air, and the wood fire crackles merrily as our hostess prepares the evening meal.

I shall never forget those days. Let my story speak for itself.

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The Rendezvous

I AM bidding farewell to the last vestige of comfort before the post-office in Podgorica. It is noon, and time that I should start on my six hours' ride to Zatrijebać. The heat is intense on the plain, but we have to climb steadily, almost immediately after leaving the broiling plain of the Zeta, up that great pile of grey rock on whose rugged slopes are dotted the houses of Fundina, our half-way resting-place.

With carbine slung from shoulder, revolver on my hip, and a bandolier of cartridges round my waist, I am saying "good-bye" to the trusty companion of other journeys, Stefan. I cannot take him with me, for he would get himself and probably me shot within an hour of crossing the border. Stefan is no diplomatist. He hates and mistrusts an Albanian as he would poison, and—says so, or at least, shows it so plainly that mere words are unnecessary. For the fiftieth time he adjures me not to let my carbine out of my hand or the revolver from my side.

"Thus thou canst never be surprised, Gospodin, and if thou art ever prepared, maybe thou wilt come safely back."

His tone shows that he hardly dares hope for even this contingency.

The great Albanian smiles grimly and significantly at Stefan. He has been sent to guide me up the mountain

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(though Heaven knows I have been the way often enough), but he is Padre Giulio's henchman, and has come to fetch me as a compliment. He understands little of the Serb language, but that he has grasped the meaning of Stefan's warnings is clear. Friend Stefan must take care when next he walks near the frontier.

"You will get sunstroke riding in this heat," cheerily sings out the vet, mounted on his wiry little pony. "Wait till the evening—it is madness to start now."

I remark somewhat stiffly that what he can do is not necessarily impossible for others.

"Ah, but I am used to it," he retorts. "Anyway, leave us your address. It is quite likely that you will get picked off over there, even if you escape sunstroke."

"Comforting!" I muse, as I remember all the warnings that I have received during the last few hours—in short, ever since I arrived late last night, when the aforesaid Albanian rose up from the shadow before the door bidding me start with him there and then. Once before I had made that journey at night, and the memory of my experiences caused me peremptorily to refuse. Then he handed me a letter from friends who had gone up that day and expected me to supper on the lofty plateau of Zatrijebać.

I mount the wretched pony. He is nowhere near up to my weight, but the only steed that was to be found, as the vet basely stole the horse that I bargained for. The bridle is characteristic of the beast, being a weird contrivance, half rusty chain and half string. There is no time for further search. I passed my word months ago to be in Zatrijebać this evening.

"*S'Bogom*, Stefan. So long, doctor," and we are off.

Whew! it is hot. The vet was right. The sun-dried

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plain, cracking with the heat, is like a fiery furnace. Even the lean Albanian, striding a yard before my pony's head, sweats. Half an hour of this and we begin the ascent up that rock-strewn track to Fundina that I have so often anathematized. At intervals the Albanian leaves me abruptly, disappearing behind a clump of stunted bushes for a few seconds, to emerge with some article of clothing that he deposited there on the way down as the heat increased.

Very slowly the houses of Fundina grow larger. There, at least, we can drink a "cup of coffee" at the han kept by the hero Kećo. At last we are there, but the Albanian swings on resolutely. Our conversation is constrained, as I know no word of Albanian and his knowledge of Serb is very limited.

He shakes his head emphatically as I shout to him to stop. "Water is farther on. There we will stop," he says in broken Serb.

Then I remember the blood feud in which Kećo lives with the Albanians, and say no more.

At the spring we halt, and my guide, with his rifle ever to hand, lies down full length to rest, after quenching his thirst with deep draughts.

An hour later and we are well up the last ridge that separates us from the uplands of Zatrijebać, and behind us lies the great plain of Zeta, with the Lake of Scutari beyond. I am alone; tired of the stumbling gait of my pony, I have dismounted and walked on ahead. A hail—was not that my name? But no, impossible; who should call me by my European name up in these lonely wastes of grey rock?

"Halt, or we fire!" and mechanically I pause, but only a second, for the challenge is in English. Reposing in a rare

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grass *dolin*, or hollow, lay my good friends, the doctor from Podgorica, and Albert.

"At last!" exclaims the doctor, brandishing a bottle. "Why didn't you turn up last night? There was feasting at Padre Giulio's, and we waited for you till after midnight. This is our last bottle of wine; all that remains of the battery we carried so painfully to Zatrijebać yesterday."

Then they tell me of the supper last night, how Padre Giulio sang old, half-forgotten Neapolitan love-songs, and how they went out into the night every half hour to listen for the shots which I would fire on nearing the church.

"We wrote to you," says Albert, reproachfully. "The Albanian had orders to bring you at any hour, immediately on your arrival."

Chatting and laughing, we spend an hour together, till a glance at my watch shows me that it will be dark before I reach my destination.

"The padre has left for Albania," declares the doctor. "He thinks you are not coming."

"But I promised to be there this evening, not before," I answer.

"Ah, yes! but that was months ago. He says you have perhaps forgotten."

We part. The thought is not pleasant, for, if true, it means a nocturnal ride to catch the Franciscan, and I love not midnight rides on the borders.

The light is failing fast as I near the church and its little living house. I have again pushed on ahead and on foot. Not a soul is to be seen. Then the padre has left without me. Impatiently I cross the little lumber-strewn garden towards the kitchen, and open the door.

Round the wood fire sits the old familiar group, just the

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same as when I last left: three or four sturdy Albanians squatting, with head-cloths thrust back, showing their shaven crowns; the good housekeeper and her children, and beyond, half in the shadow, the brown-robed friar. I am not recognized at once.

"Jesus Christ be praised!" I say. It is the only Albanian I know, and the usual formula of greeting.

"*Carissimo amico!*" shouts the friar, impulsively rushing to embrace me. "We awaited thee yesterday."

"Thou hast not gone? I had heard thou hadst given me up."

"No. Thou gavest thy word to be here to-night and I knew thou wouldst come. Coffee, Katrina. Come, sit here, for thou must be weary, and to-morrow we leave at dawn."

While supper is being prepared, we stroll into the moonlit garden, and Padre Giulio climbs a damson-tree to shake down the unripe fruit. On a low wall we sit and talk, resuming our old arguments on religion and politics, he telling me of his latest efforts at the pacification of his unruly parishioners, and the hopelessness of it all. His fresh, impassioned voice, talking in his beautiful Italian, rings over the peaceful scene. Such exquisite stillness, such beautiful thoughts, and the cool of the rocky uplands after the burning heat of the plains, act like balsam to the weary spirit. In the distance the moon is shining on the snow-clad peaks of the Proclotea, whither we are journeying to-morrow.

Verily the lot of Padre Giulio, alone in that wild land, amongst these savage but honest men, is an enviable one to him who is tired of the emptiness of the world outside.

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THE AUTHOR IN ALBANIAN COSTUME.

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The Start

THE light is stealing into my bedroom and bids me rise up and take leave for many days from beds, sheets, and similar luxuries. The room I hardly noticed last night, though we partook of our frugal supper therein.

The remnants are still upon the table, and around it a few primitive chairs and a rickety sofa; upon the walls are a few religious prints—one is of St. Francis himself. In the farther corner, upon another smaller table, is a quaint assortment of articles. Could I sketch, what a sensation that "still life" would make! There are the vestments, sacred vessels, and breviary open, showing the odd type of the print; and mixed up in this churchly collection are my revolver, my bandolier full of shining cartridges, and my trusty hunting knife. Surely a characteristic picture of Roman Catholic Albania, and a fitting frontispiece to my coming tour.

Padre Giulio is shaving without a glass; but from force of habit he stands before the window, and a huge Albanian revolver and bandolier around his picturesque person, stalks in bearing water fresh drawn from the well.

The air is keen and refreshing, stimulating the young friar to song. He has a capital tenor, and he is trolling the serenade from "Cavalleria Rusticana" to a wondering group of Albanians without.

"What hast thou in thy saddle-bags?" he asks later, as we are packing up.

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"Biscuits," I answer; "on which I can live without other food."

Padre Giulio looks incredulous as I propound the virtues of Protene, and ends by wagering that *I* cannot exist for two days without meat. I accept readily, little knowing that to-day and to-morrow are rigid fast days.

At last we are ready, and in high spirits set forth upon our journey, the Franciscan an odd figure, in habit and cowl, upon his splendid horse. The pace is too fast for my pony, and the monk insists on changing mounts, for he is half my weight. It is a grand idea, and removes the only drawback to my enjoyment of the tour.

A two hours' ride brings us to the verge of the great forest of Korito, and into its cool depths we plunge. We are joined by a handsome young Albanian with the typical clear-cut Grecian features so often seen amongst the Albanian highlanders. He accosts me in pure Italian, causing me nearly to fall from my horse in astonishment, for he is dressed, as are the rest, with rifle upon his shoulder and revolver in his sash. He is the schoolmaster of Zatrijebać, he tells me, as he walks at my stirrup, and has studied for four years at the Gymnasium in Cetinje. Italian he learnt from the Franciscan—hence the purity of his accent.

"It was easy," he explains modestly, "as I speak Latin."

Padre Giulio cites a Latin quotation, and, like a flash, the Albanian corrects him in an error.

"Yes," admits the monk, "thou art very intelligent; but see, thou carriest a rifle as even the most ignorant of thy clan. What dost thou fear? Surely *thou* knowest the carrying of arms is absurd and but a relic of barbarism. Set, then, thy brethren a good example."

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The youthful schoolmaster gravely shakes his head.

"Nay, father, it is not so. We must carry arms to protect ourselves against wild animals and—men. Only last night the wolves came down and ate a goat and a sheep; and as for the men, thou knowest, father, as well as I."

And he points to the bullet-riddled habit of the friar.

"Dost thou find much time to shoot?" I ask.

We have halted under a giant beech tree, and are munching biscuits. The schoolmaster takes an empty box, perhaps three inches by four, and runs swiftly to a fallen log some seventy yards away. There he props it up, and returning, takes his rifle. No need to load, for rifles are not carried for show, and squatting beside me, he aims long and carefully. Bang! the tiny box falls down, and another Albanian, dining near as "marker," brings it to us, neatly perforated.

"And does thy carbine shoot as well?" he asks, smiling, for it is a difficult shot.

"We cannot shoot so well as ye," says Padre Giulio, and would hinder me. "These men shoot as soon as they can walk."

Bang! The marker brings us the box again, grinning delightedly.

"Nearer the centre than mine," says the schoolmaster, admiringly. "Nay, but do all the English shoot as thou? I have read that ye are not armed, and yet *thou* hast shot as if thou wert born with a rifle in thy hand."

I blush, and congratulate my luck, mentally thanking the practice of bygone days on peaceful rifle ranges in England and big game shooting in East Africa.

The Albanians are no longer tolerant, they are respectful; but of this more anon.

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On we ride; but at the scattered village of Korito the schoolmaster bids us farewell. "Thou art coming to my village in a few days," he says. "*A riverderci.*"

The rest of the day is glorious. Spur after spur of forest-clad mountain is crossed. One hour we are up in the open, and the next down in the cool and shady depths of the beech forests. Shepherds' huts are scattered here and there, and at many we pause to quaff a bowl of milk.

It is late in the afternoon when we emerge on the downs of Grećija, commanding one of the finest views of mountain panorama it has ever been my lot to witness. Sheep and goats are grazing everywhere in great flocks, guarded by armed shepherds; and from all directions comes the echo of their shrill whistling. Grećija is the farthest summer pasturage of the clan of Zatrijebać, and the grey-haired man who is hurrying towards us is the chief of the clan. Here he lives with his family and flocks throughout the summer months, when Albanian and Montenegrin alike forsake their substantial houses of stone in the valleys and migrate to the grassy uplands to live in the rudest huts.

The chief greets us warmly; him I know from former visits, and he wears, not the Albanian head-cloth, but the Montenegrin cap, for the prince has named him Kommandir. The shield and crossed Turkish scimitars are the insignia, and in war he commands the clan.

The hut is long and narrow. One half is occupied with the sleeping places—beds of grass covered with skins. Little children are playing inside by the flickering light of the wood fire, but they speedily hide in dark corners as we enter. The housewife comes shyly forward to kiss our hands, and stoops at once to remove our boots. It is the custom to sit bootless in Albanian homes.

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We regale ourselves on bowls of milk and cheese while the monk makes friends with the children, chiefly through the aid of my biscuits. In each box is an assortment of salted and sweet biscuits and one solitary stick of chocolate. Padre Giulio breaks open box after box and gives away my treasured chocolate.

"Thou dost not mind?" he asks. "The little ones love these sweet things."

"Of course no," I answer, with forced enthusiasm; for I too have a sweet tooth.

The chief brings out the raki, and while he plies us with tots, Padre Giulio expatiates, in Italian, on his virtues.

"Throughout the land there does not breathe a better man. He is good, and verily a man of God."

Good Kommandir, Padre Giulio was right. Thou art honest and upright, fearing God and His commandments, a bold and fearless fighter when danger threatens thy clan, a man who once having given his word would never break it. To meet and know such men as thou—wild and savage as the world would call thee, not seeing thy sterling merits—is a privilege to be thankful for. Having given thy hand in friendship, no harm can come to me and mine so long as I stay with thee; and in danger thou wouldst sarcifice thy life rather than harm should come to me, and, in doing so, see nothing noble in the deed but thy plain duty. Such as thou show us what God meant when He created man.

I walk out into the gloaming, and this is what I see: great gnarled stumps in the foreground, grey rocks upon the green sward, and, falling away suddenly from my very feet, the deep mysterious ravine of the Cievna. The depths are veiled in gloom, almost terrible when the eye strives to fathom them, like some awful horror we have read about in our child-

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hood, the abode of dragons and dreadful serpents. The shades of the countless men who met bloody deaths would seem to be fighting their fierce border battles once more; the Turk descends again in his hordes, burning and ravaging till his turn comes and the Albanian surprises him in an artfully laid ambuscade. No quarter is given; it is a battle of extermination. And rippling softly the little Cievna runs on, all heedless of the crimson stains in its limpid pools, towards the plain of the Zeta, to other scenes of bloodshed.

Behind, a wall of mountain rises, and yet another and another, till the horizon is bounded by the mighty Proclotea. That staircase of rugged ridges is superb.

Right and left tower forest-clad hills, resounding now with the cries of the shepherds and the sharp barking of the dogs. From the hut comes the gentle murmur of conversation.

A horse neighs close by, and there, under a pair of beeches, graze our steeds, and to those faithful animals I go before turning in. They have had a hard day, but now they have their reward in that rich grass.

"*Amico mio*," sounds from the hut, "come, thy bed is ready."

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DEBATING THE START.

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The Source of the Cievna

"TO-DAY thou hast a treat in store," says Padre Giulio, as in the fresh of the morning we ride along the downs, towards a forest. "I know no spot more beautiful than that which we must pass this morning. But art thou giddy?"

I reply that mountaineering is my hobby.

"Yes," says Padre Giulio, doubtfully. "But our path to-day is no ordinary one. I have traversed it many times, but the first time I well remember the agonies I suffered."

"Where horses can go——" I begin.

"Nay, our horses we leave behind in another hour. This journey can be done only on foot."

Ever steeper grows the descent, and at last we yield up our horses. One of the escort cuts me a stick, and, faith! I want it. We have now crossed the border, and are in the domains of the notorious clan of the Clementi. In Montenegro they bear the worst of names, and many are the stories told of their fierce and savage raids.

"For the love of God go carefully!" exclaims Padre Giulio, as I come slipping and sliding after him. "Look!" and seizing me firmly by the hand he bids me look beneath me. We are on the brink of a precipice the sight of which makes my blood run cold, so suddenly and abruptly does it sink from the curtain of bushes before us. Two thousand feet below—we cannot see the base—races a rivulet, a thread-

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like path skirts it, and opposite rises another wall as sheer as the precipice upon whose summit we stand. Far away to the right are a village and a church, looking so ridiculously tiny as to be unnatural.

"That is Selce, our destination," says the padre. "We have many weary hours between us."

Very carefully now we proceed, sliding on the slippery grass, and clutching at bushes. No need to adjure me to caution after that terrible glance into the ravine at our right, mercifully screened by a curtain of trees!

Then the forest breaks off suddenly, and brings us face to face with the source of the Cievna. Speechless, I sink to the ground to gaze upon that wild view. Below us is a deep gorge, and a narrow plateau, similar to the one on which we are resting, faces us.

Our guide is halloing vigorously, and soon we hear faint answering shouts. With the glasses we can just distinguish a white-clad figure moving slowly across the background of green vegetation, to work round the head of the gorge towards us.

Out of the living rock a rush of creamy water plunges into the steaming depths. A little higher, a streak of silver is purling down the precipitous mountain. Shelves of pine-clad rock rise in ridges, until the final barrier of naked cliff cuts into the blue sky in a wild, jagged outline. It is the source of the Cievna, romantic and savage enough to characterize its mission as boundary between two nations who have lived in blood feud with one another for five centuries and more.

And while I sit and gaze in awe at that majestic view, the man whom we had seen opposite approaches us. He is to take us down to Selce, which our former guide cannot do, owing to clan differences. He is a villainous-looking

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ruffian, belying with that savage exterior his good, kindly soul.

"Thou art looking upon a scene that few strangers have witnessed," says the padre at length, as we prepare to continue our way. "Our guides do not remember the last occasion when a foreigner trod this path."

I had heard much of the mysterious, unknown source of the Cievna, and appreciated the privilege that was mine. But I look in vain for the path that we are to tread. There is nothing but a fantastic gorge at our feet.

"Yet that is our way," says the monk, smiling as he follows my eyes. "Now thou canst understand why I asked if thou wast giddy."

"I am not giddy," I answer proudly, though inwardly I have many qualms. For a little way the former guide accompanies us, and the two Albanians display an anxiety lest I should slip (which would be fatal), that is almost embarrassing. For some hundred feet we descend steeply, and now the gorge surrounds us like the walls of a prison.

A thread, scarce more than a foot wide, skirts the bare rock, and disappears round the bend of a cliff whose summit overhangs the base. At least we can walk upright, and that is nothing more than keeping a steady head. This is no place to contemplate the roaring cascade whose thunder is in our ears, as we move onwards along the track tending, but gradually, downwards. The corner is passed, and the length of the gorge lies before us. The cliff has receded somewhat from our path, which is, however, still upon a steeply slanting angle, and above us we now see clearly how the summit overlaps the base. In one place we see the massive baulks of timber which the peasants have dropped in bee line from the top, two thousand feet above.

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"It was here that a woman fell last year," explains the padre, and scarcely have the words left his lips when we round a bend and find an old woman and two young girls staggering under huge loads of wood. They are standing helplessly in a group, and as we come up to them the woman and a girl lie down on the upper side of the path to let us pass, and we see the second girl in a terrible predicament. Her foot has slipped over the lower side, and she is balancing on her knee between life and death. The load upon her back is too heavy to permit her to rise, and the loose earth on the shelving bank below allows no foothold.

A grasp of a hand, and she is up safely once more on the path, smiling gaily, as if it were a most common accident. Yet another few seconds and she would have been a shapeless mass, dyeing the clear pools of the torrent below.

Our guide has told me continually that lower down the path is better, but his words were a delusion and a snare.

We are bathed in sweat, and have been going downhill steadily the whole time, when we reach the stream itself.

How gloriously beautiful are those limpid pools in the smooth worn basins and cups it has slowly hollowed out of the iron rock during the countless centuries that it has roared and rushed down that ravine! How tempting for a bath! But it is as cold as ice, and we are spent with fatigue and hunger.

For five hours we have painfully crawled down those cliffs without food and without water. It is seven hours since we started. My arms and ammunition weigh tons, it seems, as I lay them upon a convenient rock.

"Put away thy note-book," says the padre, as I would make some entries. "Who knows who may be watching us?"

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A wash, and we start again for the remaining walk that is still between us and our goal. We are in a fertile valley, rich in vegetation, and sheltered from all rough breezes by projecting mountains.

Gardens of fig-trees, cherries, and damsons surround us. Clusters of grapes border our path, and little fields of tobacco stretch up and down the slopes on either side.

The clansmen have diverted the foaming Cievna into scores of life-giving canals, irrigating the steep slopes, crossing our path with a cooling swirl to spread over the rich green sward beyond.

Substantial huts are passed. Here and there a lounging Albanian greets us coolly, but not unfriendly. Women are hurrying about their household duties, and the tinkle of the church bell greets us over this scene of sylvan peace and beauty.

It is hard to realize that this is the home of a part of the savage Clementi, fiercest and most pitiless of border clans, whose deeds have been sung in my ears for many months past.

But their appearance bears out their reputation. There is the church, and the neighbouring house of the priest standing upon a little eminence, and scores of men are grouped about the entrances and in the paths. Wild, handsome men, each with rifle on his shoulder or in his hand, revolver in belt, and bandolier crammed with cartridges at his waist, stalwart and fearless; true specimens of an untameable race, who require blood for blood and do not shirk their debts when their time comes. They salute the priest reverently, me with indifference, yet many have never seen a being clad in European fashion in their lives.

We climb the steps into the broad court before the church,

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and Padre Giulio hastily whispers to me to do even as he does. I realize that I am being keenly watched, as I follow the monk across the square, and at a sign from him I reluctantly place my carbine against the wall of the church beside a dozen other rifles, and crossing myself, as he does, enter the church.

"Tired and thirsty as I know thou art," whispered he, as my gaze wanders over that kneeling, silent throng of armed men, "thou must first kneel and pray at the altar. Remember to cross thyself when I do, and follow my every movement. If these men think thou art not a Catholic thy life may be endangered."

Then he pushes through the worshippers, and at the rude altar rails he kneels. The whispers of the devotee sound like the murmur of water in my ears as I follow his example. At my left hand is the shaven head of a giant who, in his excitement, has prostrated himself on the stones, and his face rests on the altar step.

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The Friars

THE refectory is a long bare room, opening on one side on a small garden, through which dashes one of the miniature canals. It is on the first floor, and steps lead down into the garden at one end, and at the other into the gloomy space behind the high altar.

Our host is absent as we enter the room, which is tenanted by two Albanians. Their rich silver ornaments proclaim them to be influential, and indeed one is a traveller, for I saw him months ago in Cetinje. Round their necks hang curious chains, attached at their waists to the magnificently mounted great revolver butts. The white serge costume is elaborately bordered with black braid, and they wear quaint rings. Yet their huge stature and fearless looks destroy any impression of dandyism. They would shoot as straight and as recklessly as any of their clan, in spite of their showy attire.

The hand of Padre Giulio they kiss reverently, and me they greet civilly with a grip of the hand. They even yield up the comfortable home-made armchair to me, and we sit solemnly round the table while the henchman of our absent host prepares the inevitable coffee. They glance in kindly manner at me, and ask the padre if I am fatigued (how often am I to hear that question ?) I reply that I am, and thirsty and hungry. I am dying for a cup of water, which Padre

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Giulio sternly refuses until I have drunk the coffee. A few other men stalk in majestically; they are the headmen who have the right of entry into their priest's house, but, of all, I am the only one who displays curiosity. Whatever these wild clansmen feel, as regards my person or the object of my visit, they conceal under a most careless and indifferent exterior.

A hearty laugh sounds in the adjoining kitchen, and with a hasty exclamation Padre Giulio jumps up and hurries out.

A few moments later and he reappears with a sturdy red-faced Franciscan, of goodly paunch and jovial expression.

"Padre Giovanni;" and I am warmly clasped by the hand, and welcomed in musical Italian.

He sits opposite me and we are left alone. That conversation will linger with me amongst my most prized recollections. Of his life in his lonely parish far away in the impenetrable fastnesses of the Clementi, he tells me; of beautiful Naples, his home, which he last saw forty years ago.

"Forty years ago!" I repeat, gazing at his athletic figure. True, his hair and short-cropped moustache are white, but it is the face of a man in his prime.

"My son," he answers cheerfully, "I was thirty when first I saw the mountains of Albania. To-day I have walked eight hours to this place, and I am no slow walker or bad climber. My parish extends over many mountains, and sick have to be visited at all times and at all hours. Four hours to a distant member of my flock and four hours home is nothing strange. My seventy years, *grazie a Dio*, sit but lightly upon me."

Again he laughs—what a splendid laugh!—showing a set of teeth worthy of Friar Tuck, yet accustomed, as that worthy was *not*, to the hardest of provender.

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Then our host, Padre Gioacchino, comes in, and bestows on me the kiss of peace. He alone of the three monks is Albanian born, though he too has studied in Italy at Florence.

Tall, gaunt and black-haired, he has still something of the Albanian clansman in his manner, though his tonsure, brown habit, and fluent Italian, remove the impression.

With many apologies he bids us set to, as the evening meal is served up. Alas! it is still a fast day; and before me—who would have welcomed a juicy steak—is set a dish of macaroni, cooked in an oil that forces me to think of the process of cleaning firearms.

It is too horrible for words. Mechanically I swallow a few mouthfuls, and snatch a glass of wine. The wine is worse than the oil.

Not even my appetite or my thirst can overcome the horrors of that dish and that wine. I am on pins and needles lest my good host should notice my aversion, for have I not said that my hunger was enormous?

I am saved from starvation by a second course of excellent fish. But are two small fish enough to satisfy a man who has, since daybreak, trod in glaring heat one of the most difficult paths in Europe? Ponder it, ye beef eaters, and pity!

There is a consolation, namely tobacco, and, the meal finished, tobacco tins come out of capacious pockets in the folds of cassocks, and a bottle of spirits, native distilled, from a cupboard.

Then we talk. Ah, what a talk we have! Fancy telling men the news who have seen the last newspaper years ago; men who get "the latest" from the mouths of savage hillmen fresh from the markets of Scutari or Podgorica!

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They did know of the South African war, but not of its conclusion (then) some months ago. I tell them of the fall of the Venetian Campanile, and they groan in sympathy with the calamity which has befallen the Queen of Cities. I outline the present political situation in Europe, and my words are drunk in, even as water in the sand of the desert. The fact that I write impresses these worthy friars greatly, and Padre Gioacchino, politician as are all Albanians, makes a wonderful suggestion.

"Write a long article, my son," he exclaims enthusiastically. "Thou knowest us and the bravery of my nation."

It is to suggest an alliance against Europe that would assuredly destroy the balance of the Powers.

England, Italy and—Albania.

I promise, though I feel myself a liar as I give my word.

Little by little they are persuaded to talk of themselves. They do so unwillingly at first, and it is of the deeds of others that they chiefly speak.

They tell of past martyrdoms, when brothers of the Holy Order of St. Francis first came to Albania. How Padre Ferdinando once preached for three days impaled upon a stake, and a bishop was hanged in full canonicals. Gruesome tales they tell of the past, yet they speak with pride and envy of these Sowers of the Seed.

The churches, nestling in the hollows of the mountains, were built by them, their hands carved the wood and chased the stone. Choirs of boys they have trained to sing at high mass, and those that are willing they teach to read and write. Of one commandment only they cannot compel the observance—it is the sixth.

They tell of vendettas, bloody and cruel, a war of families to extermination; of border fights and intertribal fights.

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Of my good friends, the clan of Vassović, I hear the same accusations that I have listened to, in Andrijevica, of them, the Clementi.

"We are a peaceful clan," say the fathers. "It is the Montenegrins who are wicked and treacherous."

"To-day," says Padre Gioacchino, "I hear that three more of our shepherds have been shot by the bloodthirsty Montenegrins."

I smile discreetly, for this is the talk of the Sons of the Black Mountain. Besides, it is humorous to hear the Clementi call themselves "peaceful," much as I learnt to love them.

The talk reverts to Europe proper—though on the map of Europe, I never feel that *these* lands belong to the most civilized of continents—and I listen as the two Neapolitan refresh their memory of their beloved home.

Padre Giulio is fresh from Naples, comparatively—what are three years to forty?—and Padre Giovanni is curious. It is but human.

"Father," I ask him, "dost thou wish to go back to thy native land?"

"Nay, my son," he answers seriously. "I have no wish. Should I be recalled, I would go. If not"—he pauses, smiling sweetly. "Remember, I am seventy."

"I love my Albanians," says the young and impulsive Padre Giulio, "but——" and he too pauses sadly.

"*My* country," remarks Padre Giovanni, jovially, "is now Albania. I declare I am more Albanian than Italian."

Padre Giulio stifles a yawn. I look at my watch—the only watch in the place. It is 9.30, a late hour for those who rise with the sun at midsummer.

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"Good-night, my fathers; and I thank thee, Father Gioacchino."

"We thank *thee*, my son," chime in all three. "We still appreciate the world, even if we are not of it."

I am conducted to a tiny room off the refectory, and left alone.

It is a beautiful night. As I look out of the little window I become very thoughtful. The scene is brightly lit by the moon. Underneath me is the courtyard of the church, surrounded by a low wall. Beyond, the valley is bathed in silvery glory, the steep mountain sides frowning in the shadow; and over all is the peace that passeth man's understanding.

A party of men are approaching with lithe swinging strides, ghostly in their white apparel, rifles projecting at the characteristically Albanian angle from their broad black-clad shoulders. They halt in the yard and kneel to pray for a few minutes, the moon shining on their upturned features, chiselling their austere faces into an additional severity. Then they draw off into a sheltered corner for the night. They are pilgrims to the morning festival. Others come, and still I gaze on.

It is midnight when I lay my watch beneath my rough pillow and lie down to rest.

Yet it was but as a moment.

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RINGING THE CHURCH BELLS.

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"Glory be to Him"

I HAVE slept late and have seen my host but for a few hurried seconds. Padre Giulio bore me off to the church when he first caught sight of me, and then likewise left me.

Rather mournfully I have lazed about in the garden, an object of great curiosity to the women-folk, who do not hide their curiosity, and then sat down in the refectory to embody my impressions in writing. I was lonely, I confess it, for not to one of these people could I address a word. Then a splendid specimen of manhood stalked in, and I, mindful of the many warnings not to be seen writing, hastily hid my note-book.

The man gave me his hand and sat down opposite. He did not attempt conversation, and for this I admired him. How often have ignorant peasants of civilized lands, whose language I have likewise not understood, plied me with loudly spoken questions, imagining, presumably, that strength of voice must convey their meaning.

This man slowly rolled a cigarette and presented it to me gracefully, lighting it, too; and then did likewise for himself. Whence have these men their manners? This inborn courtesy I never ceased to notice.

Contentedly he sat and smoked, while my eyes wandered over his picturesque person and dwelt on his silver chain

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and on his revolver butt, which was beautifully ornamented with stones and silver filigree work.

When he left me I followed him through the kitchen into the room beyond. A few men were standing round a little window facing outwards away from the church. I approached, and immediately one and all courteously retired from the window and left me in sole possession.

What a scene!

A stretch of greensward is before my eyes, and in the centre grow two giant beech trees. Under their rich canopy stands a rude altar, and squatting in the luxuriant shade are a mighty assembly of Albanians. Where the shadow abruptly ends in a zigzag ring round the trees, so do the kneeling Albanians, and scattered in odd groups are further knots of worshippers seeking the scanty protection of diminutive trees. Even these hardy people find that fierce glare too strong for them to kneel in for any length of time. Leaning out I notice that the wall of the house is a veritable armoury; hundreds of rifles and carbines stand against it, of every pattern and date. It is a wonderful picture.

Worshippers continue to arrive in parties of threes and fours. Standing their rifles aside, they join the congregation, pushing into the already crowded space. Some of the late-comers erect common cotton umbrellas, big enough to shelter two or three. The women hold aloof, and form a compact group by themselves.

An unoccupied space attracts my attention. Can it be reserved for higher personages not yet arrived, or is it holy ground? No, it cannot be the latter, for a curious mule strays upon it, gazing in wonder at its kneeling masters, and two dogs commence a rollicking fight. At last I dis-

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cover that it is the course of one of those miniature irrigation rivulets, and is a swamp.

Then Padre Giovanni appears, clad in vestments, and commences the service, assisted by the other two friars, clad soberly in their brown habits.

The colour effect is superb. The ground tone is green, the rich dark green of the grass, and the lighter shades of green upon the mountain sides rising steeply from the valley; white is predominant amongst the Albanians, relieved by quaint black trimmings; the women have red embroidery upon their pretty black and white dresses. The priest, in gorgeous gold chasuble heightened by the sombreness of his brown assistants, is the centre-piece of that white crowd, and round about, pervading all, is the intense glare of the sun.

And as the service proceeds, and the choir chant wildly, the feeling of unreality steals over me, not to be shaken off. The Host is elevated, and a subdued cry goes up from the now prostrate throng. It is a wonderful, wonderful picture.

Then Padre Giovanni preaches. His ruddy face, close-cropped moustache, and white hair are plainly visible to me from my point of vantage. His voice, at first dull and passionless, sounds hollow, until, in truly Italian fashion, it rises, gains strength, and rings out like a clarion over the scene.

In the middle of the sermon I see a Turkish patrol marching up, a mounted officer in a little white cape at their head. They halt below my window and the officer curtly dismisses them. They lounge about indifferently, never relinquishing their magazine rifles, and the impropriety of these Mahometans' behaviour strikes a note of discord in the picture. The same thought occurs to the officer,

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and he orders them round the corner, out of sight. The ragged soldiery slouch away, and the officer comes up to where I am standing. He expresses surprise as he comes suddenly upon me, but is charmingly affable and courteous. His sergeant and corporal have followed him.

All this time the voice of the preacher rises and falls in oratorical passion outside, and then it ceases. Banners are fetched from the church, and the congregation form into a great procession. Round the church and its garden they march, the priest holding aloft the sacred Host. By the time the head of the procession has reached the door of the church the last of the followers has not left the place of worship. The Turkish soldiers shock my feelings unspeakably as they lie and squat, within a few feet of prostrated Albanians. I even wonder that the Albanians do not rise and slay these scoffing dogs, who themselves would not hesitate to kill, were the positions reversed.

Padre Gioacchino addresses a few farewell words to his flock, urging them to maintain order, and the feast of St. Stephen is almost over. There is one ceremony yet to be performed. Why do the men with one accord rush to their rifles? Is it a sudden alarm?

A shot rings out sharply, another, and then a deafening fusilade follows. Each man discharges a cartridge into the air. It is the conclusion of the festival, a fitting one for these warrior Christians.

The court is crowded to suffocation with a seething mass of men, flames spurt from their up-pointed rifles, jets of smoke almost hide the scene, while a hail of bullets flies upwards to the deep blue heavens and their Maker. Even as we salute our kings and princes with the firing of guns, so do these men greet the King of kings.

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The fusilade diminishes little by little, till only here and there a rifle cracks as a belated man reaches his weapon. Then it ceases altogether, and peace reigns once more in the solitude of that mountain gorge.

The friars come up and bear me off to dinner and to break their fast. Not indeed with meat, for they hold this feast day, which chance has ordained to fall on a Saturday this year, as a fast day. To-morrow they will eat meat, but not on the eve of Sunday. Here these good men seek the days of fasting rather than minimise them.

Wretched sinner that I am, I receive this news with inward wrath, for have I not been denied meat these last three days for similar reasons?

Yesterday my fare was but two fishes, and the day before some cheese and milk. What wonder that an undercurrent of material joy pervaded me throughout that long morning when I contemplated roast mutton for dinner?

"To-morrow at noon," whispers Padre Giulio, to whom I have confided my misery. "It is not long to wait, and then thou canst feast even as an Albanian."

I smile wanly, drawing in my revolver belt two holes, and attack the dish of evil-smelling macaroni, till I forget my weak self in the inspiring talk of that hale veteran, Padre Giovanni. A pleasant, merry meal, and the hour of our departure comes.

Good fathers, receive again my thanks, which I then too feebly expressed in words. I am learning what men *can* be.

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The Man of Grudi

WE had company up that fearful ravine. As we left the peaceful village of Selce we had been hailed, and soon afterwards a handsome middle-aged man had joined us with his little son. He was from Grudi, a distant clan, and was journeying to his home by our way. His dress was richer than that of his fellows, and in his features that grave refinement was noticeable which is so oddly in contrast to these men's lives. His Martini was beautifully polished and inlaid at the butt, while his ten-year-old boy—a serious, sturdy little chap—was armed with a Martini carbine, which he carried as lightly and as unaffectedly as if it were a plaything. Round his little waist he wore an exact counterpart of his father's well-filled bandolier, and even wore a small revolver.

As we commenced the long and weary ascent, the ravine echoing with the rifle shots of the departing pilgrims, Padre Giulio informed me that this man from Grudi was in a blood-feud with others of his clan. Only a few weeks ago he had shot a man, and his life was now in hourly danger. That was why his son was so elaborately armed.

Once during a halt we made at a point where it was possible to rest awhile, and I challenged the little boy to a trial of carbines. The little chap had been eyeing curiously my Mannlicher, and he smiled delightedly as I showed

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him the mechanism of the magazine. When I let him fire a shot from it, I laughed outright at his manifest joy, whereat he blushed, and was chid by his father. He made a fairly good hit at a rock opposite, and then spoke long and earnestly to his father. Padre Giulio translated.

"He wants such a carbine. It does not kick like his own Martini, and to be able to fire five shots without reloading must be beautiful."

That was the gist of his remarks, and, to please him, I took a shot from his carbine. Many men object to the kick of the Martini carbine, and I myself remember the days of sore shoulders when that weapon was the arm of the Cavalry. Yet, here was a little boy who stood up to the concussion as nonchalantly as if he were a war-worn veteran. And how the kick jarred his whole body!

We found a large party awaiting us as we emerged from the rocks of the ravine on to the well-wooded but terribly steep slopes stretching up to Grećija.

"Father," I said, breathing heavily, "let us rest awhile. The remaining distance is steepest of all."

Then the padre had smiled, and shown me our horses grazing through the bushes.

Very slowly we rode up, pausing continually to breathe our struggling horses, till I would have dismounted in sheer pity.

"Nay, my son; they are used to it," remonstrated the monk. "Besides, we can buy new horses when these die. When *we* die, the matter is more complicated."

Meditating on this truth, I rode on till the open downs of Grećija rolled out before us, and the Kommandir bore us into the hut to coffee.

It is finished, and I go outside into the paling day. I

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find a group of men sitting in a ring, conversing musically together, for the Albanian language is very pleasant to the ear. Sheep are being driven down by children as nimble and sure-footed as they are, shepherds whistle shrilly, and dogs bark sharply.

I am tired. My senses are soothed with the pastoral beauty of the scene, and I would lay myself full length on the soft grass, when my companions suddenly become alert. They are now kneeling, and there, on the lonely downs in the fast-fading light, Padre Giulio commences to chant the rosary. It is a scene I often witnessed afterwards, but never shall I forget the solemn effect of this evening.

The shepherds repeat the prayers from memory, chanting in rough unison. I kneel likewise, and my eyes wander over that quaint group of rough men.

The pure profile of the monk's upturned face shows clearly against the heavens, the glory of the twilight enhancing the ascetic beauty of his face. Near him kneels the man from Grudi, his hands but lately washed from the blood of his enemy, and living on when every prayer may be his last; his face is very earnest, yet loving; and as the little child of the Kommandir toddles to him, with one strong arm he encircles him, bidding him be still in a gentle aside. His son, the boy warrior, is on the threshold of his young existence. His eyes are sad and wistful, and old, for he has learnt the mysteries of death, when others at his tender age are playing innocent games. At his side lies the carbine which makes him a man at ten years of age. The rest of the circle is composed of young athletic men; there is not one of them but has often faced the deadly bullet.

The bleating of a flock of lambs mingles with the mono-

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tonous singing, and one of the youths springs up quickly to head them off.

The simple service concludes, and the monk links his arm in mine as we stroll to the edge of the great slopes. Far away opposite, forest fires are raging fiercely in the distance, on those mysterious ridges.

"Does it not remind thee of a city illuminated by Chinese lanterns?" says the young priest softly. "I have seen many such spectacles in Naples during the Carnival. When I was a student still, I mingled in those gaily lit streets. Afterwards I watched them, even as we are watching these fires now—from the terrace of our monastery overlooking the city."

"And thou wast even so far away as now?" I answer gently. The idea is poetical and the likeness startling.

"Nay," says the monk. "In Naples those lanterns were still farther away than this illumination of nature."

I understand. We watch the glow deepening and intensifying in one spot, paling in another; and as we turn towards the hut in answer to calling voices, we see great tongues of flame leaping up into the starlit heaven from the forest through which we journeyed a few hours since.

In the hut we seat ourselves on blocks of wood, and cheese and raki are given us, while a woman stirs a yellow mixture in a cauldron over the wood fire; two young children standing near us holding chips of flaming wood, acting the part of living torches. From time to time they seek new bits of wood, as the old burn down, or blow the half-smouldering chips into brighter light.

Then comes the mixture from the cauldron, maize ground into flour, cheese and milk kneaded into a doughy paste, stodgy and satisfying. We eat it from the pot with long

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A SCUTARINE AND AN ALBANIAN.

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wooden spoons. The men eat long after I have laid aside my spoon, appeased yet hungry.

Tired out, I soon lie down to rest between the monk and the man from Grudi. They soon sleep, but not so I. There is another guest sharing the hospitality of the Kommandir, and with him he speaks, replenishing the fire from time to time as it burns low. The baby cries, and I am strangely restless. I sleep and wake again. An arm is lying across my chest. I gently return it to its owner, the man from Grudi. The monk shouts in his sleep, his legs are mixed up with mine, and I rearrange our nether limbs. Again the baby wails.

Thus passes the night, part waking, part dreaming, part sleeping, till a hand firmly grasps my shoulder. Starting up, I see the kindly face of the Kommandir. He is holding a cup of milk and coffee in his other hand, and lo! the morning light is streaming in through the open door.

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The Mass on the Plateau

IT is Sunday.

A goodly concourse of shepherds accompanies us towards the lonely altar, where to-day mass is to be celebrated. The whitest of head-cloths almost cover the stern visages of the men, the most elaborately trimmed white serge jackets and trousers fit their graceful figures like a glove. Their rifles are polished to brilliancy, likewise the long steel barrel of the revolvers.

We climb a terribly steep hill, and from its summit we gaze once more on that wild chaos of mountains and gorges. It is a break-neck ride, and down the other side we must perforce dismount. The change of scenery is sharp. Gone are the verdure-clad slopes and mighty beeches, the snow-peaked mountains and the gloomy valleys. We are in a vast basin of barren grey rock, and the village we are approaching is almost invisible, built, as are the rude hovels, of the same grey stone. Little blue spirals of smoke ascend into the bluer heavens, and the wood of the roofs is weather-beaten into the same neutral tints of the rocks. Even the hardy inhabitants in their dead whits clothes form no relief in that dull picture. Snow lies in gleaming patches everywhere, and every hut has a huge block of frozen snow before its door, which, melting slowly under the midday sun, gives the shepherds water.

Now they come out and answer our hails, and men bear

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me into a wretched shanty. It is soon full to overflowing. The same warm welcome is extended to me as if I had lived all my life amongst them, viz., a grip of the hand (the Albanians do not shake) and the kiss which is not a kiss, but the laying together of cheeks.

Milk and snow, a delicious cooling beverage, is given me in a tin cup. Raki is produced, and soon I feel as if I had indeed lived my life amongst these good men.

We do not quaff our raki without ceremony. The Albanians are the personification of ceremonial politeness. Every time the glass is raised the drinker first praises the Saviour and then toasts his host.

Some Montenegrins troop in, a gay plash of colour in that black and white gathering. With them I can converse, and very animated grows the scene. Open-handed, open-hearted hospitality is showered on all.

Tot after tot is almost forced down my throat, and soon the potent spirit goes to my head. I remonstrate, but in vain. A jovial giant, with long drooping moustachios, claps me on the back and intimates that the priest is snoozing in the farther corner. He seats himself at my side with the bottle and glass. They bring me more cheese, and the giant, splendidly handsome, plays the very tempter with the raki. He takes my cap and sets it on his head. Shouts of laughter follow this action, for the effect is comically incongruous. Gently I refuse more spirit, and lie back well contented, my eyes roving over these merry, careless faces, and over the rifle and revolver-stacked wall.

Does my cigarette go out?—a dozen hands hold a glowing ember. Is it finished?—a dozen hands roll me a new one, and laugh when I know not which to take.

Padre Giulio wakes up, and it is time to proceed to the

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church. A hundred men accompany us; a few hundred yards distant a compact little body of women are trudging along parallel to us. A vast grey plain stretches out before us. It is the church. Its walls are distant mountains, its ceiling is the blue firmament, and the altar is a pile of stones far away in the centre. Surely God cannot be worshipped in a more imposing edifice, for His hands have built it, and His children who worship there have never doubted Him.

It is a huge barren plateau of great altitude, and as far as the eye can see rise hill-top and snow-peak. Soaring far above the rest, jut the jagged fangs of the Proclotea. Once a village was here, but the inclemency of the exposed heights has driven the inhabitants to more sheltered spots. Where now a rude pile of stones serves an altar for this annual mass stood a church. Its outline can still be traced in a border of stones. Scattered around are the merest skeletons of the former huts.

An Albanian unslings his rifle and slowly fires five shots. It is the bell, not softly pealing o'er hill and dale, but crashing out sharply in the clear atmosphere, summoning warlike peasants to their devotions, its echoes clashing back harshly as it strikes a wall of stone.

Soon from all directions come knots of worshippers, rifles are stacked round the whilom walls of the church, and while the monk deftly decorates the altar, they squat and lie around. I find my youthful schoolmaster, and he is curious to know how I have fared. Men come and greet me, talking through the medium of the schoolmaster, and many are the strange questions that they ask.

Why do I come to such a barren spot? Do I find this wild life bearable? I answer, and they are dumb with

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wonder that a stranger should dwell willingly even for a few days in their midst. Yet how do they know of another world, which they have not seen and have but dimly heard of? The friar comes to tell me that all is ready, and we are silent. Behind the crucifix upon the altar peep the muzzles of a dozen rifles, and the priest in his scarlet chasuble commences. I withdraw a little distance to watch the whole scene. All are kneeling save a few Montenegrins, who stand stiffly, yet reverently, throughout, for they belong to the Greek Church. The mass has a more intimate character than had the mass in Selce, and I feel infinitely more drawn to the men of Trijepsi than to their brethren of Clementi. A quiver goes through the throng as the Host is elevated. The women throw themselves on their faces; the men kneel upright with outstretched hands; the Montenegrins bow their heads, crossing themselves.

The service is ended. We form a circle of the captains and head men, and Padre Giulio excuses the plainness of the ritual.

"The stones are very rickety," he says, "and the wind is so strong that I could scarce stand steadily."

Milk and snow are mysteriously produced. My old villain of the village has a full bottle of raki, and we sit and talk and laugh from sheer light-heartedness. A dear old boy urges me to learn their language and dwell awhile amongst them, "for," he says, "we have learnt to love thee."

My old villain says, with many hearty daps on the back, that he will truly journey to Podgorica ere I leave the land, and there drink with me, "Not one oka (a quart and half) but two okas of raki, we will drink until we can drink no more." I breathe a prayer that he may not find me then.

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THE MASS ON THE PLATEAU

The sun is high in the heavens. There will be feasting to-day in all the mountain villages, and my mouth waters as I hear of lambs roasted whole, and I would fain break my fourth day's fast there and then.

We part from the Kommandir, who, with clasped hand, thanks me for the honour I have done him in accepting his poor hospitality, and begs my pardon for the roughness of the fare.

"It was a day of fasting," he says, "otherwise my fattest lamb would have been slaughtered to do thee honour. Thou must come again."

We lay our cheeks together, and I feel as if I am parting from an old friend.

Our new hosts bring the horses, and with many shouts of "Farewell!" and shots from our revolvers, we separate. Soon the plateau is ringing with the rifles. The youth of the clan are holding their Sunday shooting practice.

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ALBANIAN WOMAN AND CHILD.

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The Inferno

WE have broken our fast with dishes of lambs' lungs and liver, cheese roasted with milk into a mess somewhat resembling "Welsh rarebit," a mess of maize meal, oil, and cheese, the whole washed down with copious draughts of half-frozen milk and judicious, if frequent, tots of raki.

The women have drawn our boots from our feet, and Padre Giulio is already snoring upon his pile of rushes and sheepskins.

It is the afternoon after the mass on the great plateau of Kostice, and we are quartered in the summer residence of an Albanian magnate who, with his three stalwart sons, his wife and their wives and one or two nondescript old women —perhaps his mother and his aunt—inhabit a rude hut fourteen feet by eight, into whose limited space the padre and I are squeezed. It is entered by a primitive door four feet in height, its walls are loosely piled blocks of grey stone and odd planks, while logs of wood constitute the roof.

Inside this chimneyless abode smokes a fire upon the earthen floor, and along the substantial but airy walls are piled the coarse blankets and sheepskins used to cover the hardy limbs of this motley assembly at night. It is typical of the irregular collection of huts which constitute this

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solitary mountain village, grouped together in a small cup in the midst of this waste of grey hills. Our host, a handsome man in his prime, is bidding his numerous womenkind "be still," in a stentorian whisper, half causing the padre to start uneasily in his post-prandial nap, and through half-closed eyes I watch him. He has regular, clear-cut features, a fine mouth partially covered with a luxuriant moustache, and most kindly eyes. The head-cloth is pushed back, disclosing his head shaven to the crown, and the thick bush of hair hanging on his neck. As I drop off to sleep, I hear the shots and shouts of the mountaineers firing energetically at improvised stone targets outside. Then Padre Giulio wakes me, and the women pour cups of icy water over our heads and hands, and we stroll slowly away from the village.

Preparations are in full swing for the coming feast of meat. Below our hut lies a hollow, and here men are busily chopping and shaping huge stakes; carcases of lambs are being spitted, and low walls of stones erected to keep in the heat. Against the grey background these men in their black and white dress are scarcely distinguishable, and form but a part of that neutral-tinted picture.

Others are bringing wood, and in each little square of stone fires are lighted, with the lambs now ready, four in each square. In the bright sunlight the flames scarcely show, and thus we leave the busy scene.

Up rough tracks trodden by sheep and goats we climb, past the holiday riflemen, who pause to salute the priest, and out on to the vast hillside, sparsely vegetated with tufts of coarse grass. Everywhere bleat great flocks of sheep, seeking with difficulty a meal on these barren heights. All is grey, an eternal grey like unto a stormy ocean, wave-

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tossed, bleak and cold, yet overhead stretches a rich canopy of blue, and beyond, in the distance, rise the forest-clad slopes and mountains of Clementi.

With great discrimination, proving former visits, the monk leads me to a spot where the rocks have formed a natural bench, and here we seat ourselves to gaze upon that distant panorama. The greyness ends abruptly, changing mercifully into the rich green of the beech forests. To our extreme left the Kom rears its mighty peaks to heaven. But this imposing mountain is eclipsed by that rugged pile before us, the Proclotea. How fitting is its name, the "damnèd mountain" of ancient history!

Out of the beautiful green they jut like the broken teeth of a comb from a bed of moss. The snow is lying deep on many of their inhospitable ridges, while the fangs are so inaccessible and steep that not even snow can find a resting place upon those virgin heights, never yet trodden by the foot of man.

To-day there is scarce a peak in the world that men have not climbed and explored, yet here in Europe stands a mountain as wild as any, where to climb is death. The savage clansmen round its base let no stranger pass, and they themselves have nothing to seek where even the goats find no reward. A few brave men have ventured to its base to find the muzzles of rifles barring further way. The Albanian saying that the life of a man is worth but the price of a cartridge is no vain boast, and one which travellers remember sometimes to their cost, when the rifles have begun to speak it.

Strange, passing strange, is this land before us, lying opposite to Italy, by steamer but a few hours away, and I must fain speak of it to my companion, separated only by

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twenty-four hours' travelling from his native city of Naples.

"Yes," he admits, "but the difference! These men seek only to keep what is their own. Their honesty and morality is beyond comparison with that of the people proud in the possession of so-called civilization, so near, yet so immeasurably distant."

"And their love of murder?" I venture.

"We kill, too," he replies sadly, as we slowly turn our backs on that glorious view. "Their murders are those of mistaken honour and custom. They do not assassinate those to whom they have sworn allegiance or friendship, neither do they kill for gain. Ah! if we could only teach them *that* commandment, what a race of men they would be!"

And I am forced to admit this truth, as we sit half an hour later in the hut of the captain of the village. With what courtesy and tenderness does this burly giant attend to our wants, divining our wishes ere they be spoken, setting before us his little all with the grace and unaffectedness of a true gentleman.

Never did I witness a single wounding action, or hear an ill-chosen word, the whole time that I spent in these men's midst.

Then we stroll on towards our hut, and on the way I pass the little pond surrounded by a morass. It is the only drinking water for the beasts, and they sink up to their barrels in the slush. Active men with poles stand around, lifting a cow more firmly sunk than the rest as with a lever. Even in the watering of their cattle must these hardy men meet with difficulties. From all sides the flocks and herds are wending their way downwards towards this quagmire previously to being driven into the stone corrals before

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their owners' huts. The deep hollow before our hut is now a veritable huge kitchen—a score of sheep are roasting slowly, turned leisurely by their brawny turnspits.

The young schoolmaster joins me, for the friar has gone on, and other men come plying me with questions. As the light fails I rejoin the friar, sitting on a stone before the hut and overlooking the hollow.

"What a scene for Dante!" he says softly, his eyes resting on the strange view before us.

It is indeed a very Inferno. In the deepening twilight the similarity is rapidly heightened till the impression thus won becomes ghastly. Moving vaguely, the grey figures hover around the fires, the roasting carcases assume a horribly human appearance, till a picture of hell, or souls in most awful torment appears, worthy of inspiring the brush of a Wiertz.

Two men near us begin to sing, and the monk, rapidly translating between the long-drawn-out verses, tells me of a bloody deed near Scutari, when Mahometans massacred Christians, and of the terrible revenge which the hill-men took.

The ridge of hills opposite is sharply silhouetted against the last glimpse of the setting sun. A man, or devil, rakes a fire below, and a shower of sparks suddenly and briefly illumines the uncanny scene, heightening the weird effect. Here and there a flame shoots up, vividly disclosing the figures of squatting, gloating men, the jagged edges of the rocks, and the cruel spits.

I am almost thankful when the friar bids me come to rosary and we seek the warmth and homeliness of our hut.

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" Whoso Sheddeth Man's Blood "

RUBBING my knees, somewhat surreptitiously I must confess, I mentally breathe an additional prayer of thanks that the long and monotonous rosary is concluded. Besides, I am very hungry; the mountain air has given me an appetite, whetted by the wearisome chanting, and now by our hosts with tots of raki.

The hut is lit fitfully by the flames of the wood-fire, and through the open door, drawing off clouds of penetrating blue smoke, I see mysterious figures busily employed in dissecting a carcase. The work is evidently strenuous, for with a contempt of the sharp night air, a veritable young giant has stripped himself to the waist. Now he comes in, bearing a great wooden tray whose burden makes fine play of his muscular arms. A table has been placed before us, a slab of wood raised a couple of inches from the ground by pegs, and our host selects the daintiest morsels of roast lamb and offers them to us. Should he overlook a particularly dainty bit, another of our attentive circle grasps it with sinewy fingers and adds it to our already alarming pile.

I murmur to the monk to cry enough, but he laughs.

"Hast thou not clamoured for meat these last three days?" he says.

"Yes," I respond meekly; "but I want to eat something again to-morrow."

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Our friends do not eat yet themselves, they wait, watching our onslaught with evident pleasure. At last the men yield to our entreaties, and at a little distance from us they fall to with an energy that is not pretty to see. Padre Giulio's henchman has mysteriously supplied us both with knives and forks, though how he has carried them I know not; for mountaineers know not such things, and tear and worry their bones with all the experience of four-footed animals. Even now they still discover a tender piece of flesh and pass it over to our laden platters.

Still I comfort myself that I personally superintended their ablutions, and, after all, we do not always know what happens in the seclusion of our own kitchens.

We have eaten enough—nay, more, to be candid—and I retreat into a corner, where, with my back propped up against the rocky angle of the stone walls, I smoke a contemplative cigarette. I wonder where these men stow all those blocks of meat, men who live usually on two bowls of maize meal a day and thrive. One by one they drop out of the ring, and recline as we do round the walls of the hut. A woman comes first to us and then to them and laves our hands. It is a necessary ablution. Then, the men having been satisfied, these faithful women withdraw to the farthermost corner and devour the remainder. They are comparatively soon finished—it would be indelicate of them to disturb their lords unduly with the sound of their noisy eating—and the last remnants are cleared away from our sight. The lids of tobacco tins snap as they pass from hand to hand, all is decorous and polite—the Albanian is once more a polished gentleman. Peace reigns supreme, as we puff our fragrant cigarettes, a peace not disturbed by the distant sounds of song rising from the adjacent huts. I know that round the

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ALBANIANS.

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rude walls of each hut is seated just such another ring of grave and thoughtful men, undergoing the pleasant process of absolutely healthy digestion. And somehow the repulsiveness of the gorge vanishes for do not these men lead lives of austere frugality for, roughly, three hundred and sixty days of the year? By all means let them have their little failings, if it be one; other nations who eat more prettily have their little failings too.

A happy thought strikes me, and I whisper it to the monk, who is lying back at full length, his fine head pillowed on his hands beside mine.

"Of course," he answers, and translates my request into soft Albanian.

An embarrassed conference follows, and some young man, upon whom the choice of the men has fallen, coughs a little nervously. Then he raises himself and begins to sing. Albanians have powerful voices that never tire. They can sing as vigorously at the end of a day's march as at the beginning, and long-drawn notes, which conclude every verse, testify to their magnificent lungs, which would be the envy of every professional singer.

"Ah, I am glad he is singing that legend!" remarks the padre. "Wait, I will tell it to thee afterwards."

And so I lie and listen to those wild notes rolling out into the darkness, to mingle with a dozen other songs resounding in the peaceful night. Though each listener could sing the song himself, he listens attentively, if impassively. There is no interruption till the youth concludes, and smiles shyly his acknowledgment of our thanks. Then the padre draws closer to me and begins the tale which has just been sung.

It told of a beautiful Christian maiden and her two brothers, whom she loved as dearly as they loved her. They lived in a

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town at some distance from Scutari, and a young man courted the girl and found favour in her and her brothers' sight. But the Turkish Pacha, governor of the town, likewise loved the girl, and as religion forbade him to marry her, he set about to gain his unlawful desires in another fashion. It was easy enough, and on a trumpery charge the brothers and the girl's lover were removed to Scutari in custody. The same night the defenceless girl found herself in the Pacha's harem. She was feasted, and, hiding her feelings, bided her time. When the hour for retirement came she followed her captor to the sleeping-room, but with tears and lamentations she begged one more favour.

"I am a Christian maiden," she said, "let me pray once more to my God."

The Pacha granted her request, and stood discreetly on one side.

The maiden had gained what she wanted, and snatching a dagger hanging on the wall, crept silently towards him. He heard her, but it was too late. He turned towards her with outstretched arms to receive, not the fair Christian, but the dagger in his heart.

There was no sound, and the girl fled unperceived and silently. A few days later she reached Scutari, finding also her brothers, now set at liberty, and her lover. She married him and a child was born to them. Some years passed; her brothers being suspected of the murder had fled, but now had returned and lived in hiding for awhile in the city.

There was still a great reward on their heads, and this the husband knew. Very soon he learnt from his wife that her brothers were in Scutari, and he gave them through her an invitation to come and feast at his house. Then he told the authorities.

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The brothers came, and whilst feasting, soldiers bore them off to prison and to death. When the woman learnt of their fate she took her husband's handjar and sharpened it till it was as keen as the blade of a razor. She prepared a feast, even as it had been prepared for her dead brothers, when they had been lured to their fate, and bade her husband and her little son partake of it.

Quietly she drew the terrible handjar from the folds of her dress, and with a single blow she severed her husband's head from his body. A second blow, and her son's head rolled likewise on the floor.

> "As I slew my husband, lo! my heart leapt for joy,
> Yet when I killed my son, my heart burst with agony."

"That is the last verse," concluded the padre.

The Albanians were watching me with a curious intentness. The story had been well told, far better than I can tell it, and, I feel cold.

"Yet why did she kill her son?" I venture, at length.

"Her two brothers were killed," he replies. "The revenge of blood requires an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and it was the son of her brothers' betrayer. The laws of the vendetta are rigid and holy in these people's eyes."

"Holy?" I repeat, looking at the friar.

He looks sad.

"It is even so. More holy than the Catholic faith to them."

"And canst thou not teach them otherwise?"

"I have tried, and they answer with a text. There are hundreds of such stories, my friend, and they are all true. Such things happen to-day and will happen to-morrow.

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Come, let us now sleep; the men are tired. There are many things which we cannot understand."

Ready hands prepare our beds. As I lie down a man draws up the covering to my breast as deftly and tenderly as a mother laying her child to rest, saying—

" Rest well, friend, in the care of our Saviour."

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At Play

IT had been a merry day, the merriest in fact of the whole trip. In the early morning we had ridden to a far-away village; the path had been difficult to negotiate on horseback or on foot; over grey rocky hills, sliding down rocky downs, or stumbling along rocky valleys. Once my horse had be gun sliding down a particularly steep slope, and I was already wondering what I should look like below, when half a dozen men sprang like lightning to my side, and arrested farther downward progress by sheer strength.

Then we had arrived at the village, mass had been celebrated in a hollow in the vast basin of grey, and we had fortunately found a resident shepherd there who had been a member of the winter church choir. So the mass had been choral, and I, standing aloof, had watched the startling splash of colour in that dreary waste, and listened to the fresh musical voices of priest and chorister pealing through the rock-bound valley. The congregation was small; only the shepherds of a tiny village perched up the hillside, a few hundred yards away, were present.

Afterwards an old man had taken me under his wing, too much so, for soon the atmosphere became highly convivial.

Others came and bore us off to another hut, till I began contemplating riding home, precipices or no precipices, at a hand-gallop. The monk snoozed discreetly in a corner, and left me to the tender mercies of my hosts. One wound the

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Albanian head-cloth about my head, and all laughed in pure light-heartedness. With roast meat and milk, with cheese and raki, laughter and song, hour after hour was whiled away in the cool, dark interior, whilst outside the sun shone down in a cruel white glare. Some Montenegrins joined the throng, and once more I could express myself freely. A pretty maiden ministered to our wants, her face of that pure, clear-cut Grecian type so often seen amongst Albanians, and when the jokes began to broaden, lo, the padre woke up and declared it time to go. And faith it was ; I rose with alacrity, yet sorry to leave my merry friends. The old man kissed me, not once, but often, and as we rode up the sun-scorched hill the villagers turned out en masse, giving us a rousing parting fusillade.

The Montenegrins insisted on a short visit to their village on our way back, and more raki, tempered with black coffee, was forced upon us, until it was with feelings of thankfulness that I topped the last ridge and caught sight of the huts which formed our temporary home.

The villagers were at play, their recreation chiefly consisting in target shooting. The air resounded with the sharp cracks of the magazine rifles, and the duller ones of half obsolete Martinis.

We pass such a group of marksmen, and amongst them I spy my schoolmaster friend.

"Ah, at last thou hast returned! Come and shoot," he cries, brandishing his rifle over his head. "My comrades have heard of thy prowess."

"The devil!" I murmur, and swing off my horse. There are times when fame is not desirable, and I feel it at this moment, but refuse to shoot I cannot. Modesty these men would misunderstand.

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"Maintain our honour," calls the padre, as he rides on, and I am left with the riflemen.

A wild group surrounds me, and I am granted a respite while my carbine passes from hand to hand, its mechanism explained by Padre Giulio's henchman, who never leaves me. We are standing in a little walled-in space before a hut, and two hundred yards away up the hillside are a row of little white stones, five in number. These are the targets.

"Let them shoot awhile, for I am still shaky from the ride," I say to my interpreter, and, nothing loth, they do so, each man resting his arms on the low wall. The grey chips fly round the white stones, and at last a stone is hit. The stone is soft and splinters into dust. A cry goes up, and from behind a boulder the "marker" appears to place another target.

"Now!" says the schoolmaster, and I slip a magazine into the breech.

As I stand out into the ring, bravado making me scorn a rest, a hush falls on the assembly. They do not realize that I have an immeasurable advantage in a light weapon, hair trigger, and special sights.

I fire rapidly, and the fifth stone dissolves into a white puff. The men, who have been as silent as the grave until I bring down my empty carbine, burst into a storm of applause. Foremost in their congratulations are the schoolmaster and the monk's henchman: both had felt their reputations—as well as mine—at stake, and now their relief is great. I retire quickly, breathing fervent prayers of thankfulness, for these men would have taken no excuses of "light," "wind," or "mirage." In their eyes the good shot is the man who hits.

A rugged giant comes towards me, and bears me off by main force to his hut a little distance away. His young wife,

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tricked out in a multitude of bangles and silver chains, is overwhelmed. She darts angry glances at her beaming husband—who is conversing fluently, all heedless that I understand scarce a word—for all the world as if she were the wife of a Western gentleman surprised in disorder by a sudden visitor brought in by an unthinking but well-meaning husband.

She draws him on one side. I can imagine her saying: "Really, how thoughtless of you! Here are all the pots lying about the room and not one washed up. Whatever will your friend think of us? And we haven't a thing worth eating in the house. How often have I begged you to give me a few minutes' warning and not take me by surprise like this! One good thing, it is holiday time, and I have my best dress on."

And he, unfeeling brute, roars heartily, and tells her to bring a dish of cream and a ladle. That is evidently what he does say, for soon she brings me, blushing deeply, a bowl of delicious cream and a wooden ladle. Placing her hands upon her breast—and here the resemblance to the West ceases—she meekly withdraws.

Out comes the bottle of raki and a glass, and squatting opposite each other we feel as if we had known each other for years. The shooting outside has nearly ceased, and then it stops altogether, whilst shouts of laughter proclaim that some other game is in progress.

As soon as I decently can, I take my leave, not without difficulty, because my host evidently thinks I should first consume the two or three quarts of cream and the bottle of spirits. I succeed in conveying to him by signs that I really cannot, and, bending ourselves double, we leave the hospitable roof.

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AT PLAY

The village has congregated round a small natural amphitheatre watching the younger men—nay, and some elder ones—disport themselves at games which I have seen played by little children in other lands.

Now they are surrounding two men in a ring. One of the pair in the centre is squatting, whilst his companion, with both his hands upon the other's head, seeks to keep the yelling circle at bay with his feet. The idea is to smack with unnecessary violence the squatting man's head, but care and speed must be exercised, for the guardian's feet dart out in all directions. Nay, with a firm support on the human pedestal, he gives a right and left almost simultaneously with beautiful accuracy, right in "the wind." The victims only cough a little and laugh, and then a brawny warrior gets home with a thud on the victim's head, that makes mine ache with sympathy. The guardian has now to act as target, and doubtless the men he injured take care that *his* releasing clout shall be without dispute.

Soon they tire of this, and take each other on their broad backs standing in a circle. A ball of hard-knotted headcloth—I had nearly said handkerchief or towel—is given to one of the "riders." He feints once or twice, and then throws with all his force at another couple. The "rider" in his effort to catch it capsizes, and amidst shrieks of laughter "horse" and "man" roll to the ground, whilst the others scatter. A game like rounders follows, the men struck fairly with the ball having to take the place of "horse." And so they play on, displaying an enormous amount of energy and high spirits.

Then they play leapfrog as lustily as schoolboys, and all the little children of the village stand around, the only serious people in that merry crowd. At a seemly distance

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stand the women folk, some holding infants in their arms. Doubtless the little ones are longing for the time when they may join in these merry games, which should be theirs by right.

It is the elder men who sit in the front places, and many a toothless gum is displayed in a hearty roar of laughter when a young man rolls headlong in the sand.

As I leave this quaint throng of topsy-turveydom, they begin a new game. One man binds his opanki (shoes) round his head as giant ears, and hides behind a wall. Two others, one on all fours barking loudly as a dog, the other with a gun, starts out to stalk the "hare." The human dog scents the human hare, the huntsman levels his piece and cries "bang," and amidst cheers the quarry rolls on his back. It is nothing but "hide-and-seek," adapted to their sporting instincts.

As I rejoin the monk on the slope above, we still hear their boisterous laughter and shouts.

"Great children, are they not?" says the padre, "but only on a few days in the year do they play thus. Life is otherwise a very serious matter to these men, where death lurks behind almost every boulder."

We pause a moment before continuing our stroll. The animated scene is below us. The good man's face grows very soft.

"I love to see them thus," he says, but his smile is sad. "I have seen them in very different moods."

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Calm and Deep Peace

AND thus do all good things come to an end. We are bidding farewell to hospitable Kostice. In the fresh early morning Padre Giulio celebrated mass at the far end of the village upon a rude stone altar, at whose corner stood a wind-beaten, worm-eaten cross of quaint design.

That concluded, the monk and I paid farewell visits (for there is as much etiquette to be observed in an Albanian vilage as in any of our cities and towns), taking care not to enter first the hut of one in an inferior station of life. Strange to find the priest of a mountain clan exercising the same diplomacy with his parishioners as the vicar of a provincial town!

In each hut we have drunk coffee, milk mixed with snow, raki, and bowls of rich cream.

Our own particular host, whose roof has given us shelter for the last few days, has prepared us a formidable meal, a superfluity after our round of visits. Good, handsome Midašdjoka, with what pleasant memories I still think of thee and thine!

He accompanies us on our long ride back to Zatrijebać—ten weary hours—and his two sons, likewise the gnarled kapetan and other villagers. We are a formidable company as we climb over the dividing ridge and fire our last revolver cartridges in farewell, rifles, bandoliers, and revolvers complete; Katrina, Padre Giulio's housekeeper, heavily laden

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with the sacramental vessels and robes, which another woman helps her to carry, and a score of men, accompany us for the first few hours.

It is a glorious ride through great woods of beeches, past gurgling streams, and skirting precipices, sometimes at their base, then up their beetling heights, which yield a shuddering view into their leafy depths. Soon we strike the Montenegrin path to the Kom, and pass flock after flock of sheep and goats, all on their way to those rich pasturages which I know and love so well.

We pass hale old Bozo, gay septuagenarian, in whose hut I spent many happy days just a year ago. He nearly tumbles off his pony in his hurry to give me the kiss of friendship.

Six maidens, all mounted man-fashion on six shaggy ponies, amble giggling by, all but the sixth, a sweet maiden, blushing terribly because her pony is refractory and shows an inclination to follow mine. How the other five—safely past—recover confidence, and call embarrassing remarks to their erring sister! An Albanian cures her pony of his love for us with a resounding thwack of his thick stick, and we proceed, meeting whole families, their household goods packed on ponies' backs, the elders mounted and the young men striding along, rifle on shoulder; little children guiding with shrill whistles lively herds of goats; timid sheep which gaze wonderingly at us, preparatory to a sudden dash into the leafy thickets, accompanied by a storm of imprecations, as lurid from the children as from the men. Across the bleak plain of Korito, where once a hailstorm caught us, drenching us to the skin, and chilling us to the very marrow, but now a blazing furnace.

Once more through the cool forest depths, with frequent

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halts, when we stretch ourselves full length on the soft moss. The old kapetan is ill and he is riding my horse, much against his will, but I am glad. With a young Albanian I roam far ahead, attempting impossible rifle shots at small birds, or pausing to chip a rock on the skyline after long and careful aim and much judging of distance.

Through the scattered village of Zatrijebać, up the last great hill, and at the brink of the awful ravine of the Cievna we await the others.

Hundreds of feet sheer below us flows the little Cievna, again, as at its source, in a setting of unparalleled grandeur. How often have I sat here with Padre Giulio, for hours together, talking, talking of the world outside, and of this little world of its own! Noisy cities, hurrying crowds, ambitious hopes, quarrels and hates, how insignificant are ye all when face to face with such a view as this!—when the only sound that disturbs that serene silence is the distant low of a calf or the bleating of a lamb, the only worrying thought that it must end too soon.

A perfect spot for dreamers and idealists, for those who love to be with Nature, which is God. Not, too, without its contrasts, for I know a hasty word, a hurried shot, would people those grand slopes with crowds of men lusting for blood and death. And I seem to see it all again as the padre has oft conjured up the scene to me, men fighting, the echo of their rifles crashing round the ravine, the hotly contested spur beyond the little river where men drop to rise no more, and in the thick of the battle moves a little figure in brown habit, tending those still living and writhing in mortal agony, indifferent to the bullets that rend his cassock, heeding only those poor erring sheep of his.

Even now his soft voice sounds in my ear.

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"I knew I should find thee awaiting us, Carissimo. But come, the men are weary and thirsty. This evening, when the moon is shining, we will return and talk once more—our last talk."

And lo! gone are the warring bands, the setting sun illumines the gloomy ravine with an ineffable glow of peace, and the friar presses my arm as we walk away to his house, a few hundred feet distant.

The men eat and drink, the kapetan kisses me a score of times, uttering thanks which I do not deserve, and departs for his home, after first exacting a promise to break my fast with him on the morrow ere I ride down into the valley. Midašdjoka, too, bids me farewell, he and his sons. They return the way we came to-day, after but an hour's rest, and the padre and I are left alone.

By the light of the rising moon we sit once more in our favourite spot. Before we leave it the Cievna is sparkling like a writhing serpent of burnished silver, and far away gleam the snowy peaks of the Proclotea.

"Thou wilt come again?" asks the friar, after we have sat long in a silence too beautiful to break.

"If God wills, I return," is my answer, and he understands.

"Then I shall see thee again. Do not forget us in thy cities, for we shall think often of thee."

And I promise.

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THE BAZAAR, SCUTARI.

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In Scutari

"NO," says the captain of the *Danitza*, contradicting me, "the situation is *not* usual. The discontent of the Miriditi is greater than I have known it to be for the last five years."

We are finishing our breakfast in the early morning shade before the little Greek's hotel. He shall be nameless, for he is a man of oily tongue and preposterous bills, a Greek of the Greeks. The Austrian professor is toying with an egg, and an empty soda-water bottle proclaims that the previous night's impromptu sing-song in the Greek's courtyard in the sultry climate of the Albanian plain has not agreed with him. We had foregathered here the day before at dusk, and the stars had paled ere we sought our respective couches.

Yesterday the burly captain had brought the professor and a German on board his little steamer. During the evening Austrian consulate officials joined us, then the little Turk who is responsible to the vali for the antecedents of every stranger who sets foot in Scutari. Later came the Italian schoolmaster, with Djakovo the civilized Albanian, and a Turkish captain of artillery. It was just such a polyglot assembly as can be met with only in the Orient, and my head was buzzing still at the memory of that babel of tongues, each man relapsing into his mother-tongue as the hours had worn on.

"Will it be safe to visit the bazaar?" hazarded the pro-

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fessor through his handkerchief. A battalion of ragged Turkish infantry was just swinging by to the tune of a wild Oriental march, and the road was dusty.

"If the captain takes us, we shall be in very good hands," I answer with memories of other visits, under his efficient guidance, to the evil-smelling, many-coloured market of the Albanian capital.

"Let us go," says the captain. "Later, the heat will be unbearable for you, professor," he adds, with a wink at me.

Across the Turkish cemetery the clock from Paget's house chimes the hour of five, and the professor starts, looking hastily at his watch. Then he shakes it sadly.

"Must have dropped it," he murmurs.

"Turkish time, four hours of difference," remarks the captain laconically, and whistles for a cab.

An antiquated vehicle, swaying alarmingly over the atrocious road, dashes up, the wild-looking driver yelling as he whips the attenuated and sore-backed horses, and pulls them up on their haunches a yard away from us.

"It would be an interesting study, professor, to trace the origin of the cab," I say. "An essay on the subject might prove——"

"Will it hold together till we reach the bazaar?" interrupted the professor, somewhat rudely, for he has hurt himself against a mysterious corner skilfully concealed under a ragged covering.

Another yell and we are off, butting each other and finding more corners alternately. The pleasure of carriage-driving in Scutari is not that of London or Vienna, and is attended with much physical and mental suffering. In twenty minutes the horses come to a standstill abruptly,

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A BACKWATER, SCUTARI.

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after ploughing through a foot of sand with all eight legs planted at an angle before them. The professor uses an unacademical word as he pushes me back to my seat, and when the captain has found his hat we emerge on the glaring road.

Thousands of Albanians—men, women and girls—cover a desolate waste of ground. It is the wood market, and mules, donkeys, and small horses stand patiently under their enormous loads, swishing off the myriads of flies with a clock-work regularity. All around us jostle great men in every costume of the odd score of the Albanian mountain clans, unarmed, but with the inevitable bandolier of cartridges round their waists; handsome, well-grown men they are, head and shoulders taller than the everlasting patrols of disreputable Turkish soldiers who, with rifles at every angle of the slope, follow unhappily a wretched-looking corporal.

We enter the bazaar, a maze of badly cobbled alleys, between rude wooden booths displaying a confusing medley of wares, gaudy sashes, old carbines and rifles, Oriental embroidery, Albanian clothing, powerful-smelling meats, and cheap imitation jewellery. The projecting roofs meet overhead in the narrow alleys, just disclosing a strip of blue sky, through which the sun cuts harshly, as with a knife, into the steaming atmosphere below. Negroes, Asiatics, all the unclean elements of the Turkish Empire, are crowded into these narrow ways: gorgeous Scutarine merchants in jackets gaily embroidered in gold, silk shirts, red skull-caps with enormous blue tassels, voluminous black breeches of marvellous cut, and white stockings; their women-folks in scarlet cloaks and hoods; and, everywhere predominating in stature and numbers, the white-clad, lean hillmen, their revolver belts empty for a few hours in their lives. The

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law insists on all arms being left at the guard-houses which surround the city; and could we peep inside one of those solitary blockhouses we should see the walls hung with fire-arms of every description and make of the last thirty years.

Threading their way slowly but surely down every alley tramps a patrol. The Turks are obviously nervous, and the police on point-duty have one and all their revolver cases unbuttoned. It was only recently that Turkish soldiers burnt a church of the most powerful clan of Northern Albania, that of the Miriditi. Officially the Turks are blockading them, but in reality it is the clansmen who have closed the roads to the sea, causing weeping and gnashing of teeth amongst the merchants and traders of Scutari. Retaliation is expected, and many are the voices raised this day clamouring that the bazaar should be closed, for the Miriditi have sworn to come and take their lawful revenge.

In a little square we enter a café, tired, hot, and bewildered. A solitary tree occupies the centre, and under its shade lie men and women snatching a little rest from the turmoil around them. At one end of the square an alley leads over the open plain beyond, for we are on the outskirts of the bazaar, which ends abruptly as if it were a walled-in town.

Six men in the Albanian serge swagger past. The black-bordering and embroidery of their clothes is more elaborate than that of the simpler costume of the hillmen.

"Watch these men," says the captain, "They are men of the Miriditi."

"What effrontery!" ejaculates the professor, who has been drinking in the story of their doings during the past few hours. "Do the Turks allow it?"

The captain shrugs his shoulders expressively as the clans-

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men, with an indescribable air of bravado, disappear in the crowded alley, eyed askance by the chattering Turks. A patrol follows them at a discreet distance.

We sip our delicious coffee and gaze our fill at the ever-changing scene, when the captain murmurs an oath under his breath. His body has become rigid, and instinctively we follow the direction of his eyes.

In the middle of the square stands a man of enormous stature, clad in the garb of the Miriditi. One hand is carelessly placed in his open shirt; the other rests on his empty sash, thumb in bandolier: a magnificent man, and a chief of his clan. As he thus stands a patrol slouches past, the corporal eyeing him keenly. With a nonchalance worthy of the highest civilization, the chief withdraws his hand from his bosom and rolls a cigarette, spitting on the track of the departing soldiers.

"That is Adhem Beg, one of the most important leaders of the Miriditi," I explain to the professor.

The captain interrupts. "Watch him. He means mischief."

Scarce are the words uttered when the Albanian has drawn a silver-mounted revolver from his shirt. *Crash!* A Turk basking idly in the sun gasps and slides in a heap to the ground; and ere one of the petrified loungers can move, that revolver speaks sharply once more. With a scream, another Turk throws up his hands and rolls sideways in the filth-laden gutter, snatching at the burning cobbles as he rolls. All is confusion in a second now; men rush hither and thither, some up the alleys, others darting in the bazaar doorways, colliding with each other, shouting and cursing. The peaceful scene of a minute before, typical of Oriental laziness, is transformed into a yelling inferno.

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Unmoved only is the Albanian ; and see, his pistol is raised once more as he deliberately selects another victim. *Crash !* and a third Moslem bites the dust. But now down the alley comes another babel of shouts. A patrol is literally cleaving his way with rifle-butt and bayonet through the panic-stricken fugitives. The Albanian sees them coming, smiles, and darts for the open country. It is not flight—he is too dignified for that ; but, like a deer, he courses, running in zigzags towards a low wall a hundred yards away. It is obvious that if he reaches that he is safe ; but twenty yards are between him and his goal as the soldiers come into the square and quickly drop on their knees. Five rifles ring out with a deafening crash almost simultaneously.

With hearts beating to suffocation we watch the fugitive. He swerves, but runs on. His hand is on the wall. He bends to vault it while the magazines click crisply as the second cartridge is shot home. Again the rifles speak, and the Albanian slowly, very slowly, slips down on his side of the wall. It looks as if the strength of his knees gave way at the moment of his spring. A puff of blue smoke comes from the now prostrate man, a chip of wood hits the captain in the face, and then all is still.

Five minutes later we learn that Adhem Beg was shot in five places, and with his last dying breath he fired his farewell shot.

The bazaar is in an uproar as we with difficulty force our way homeward to the cab-stand. Bugles are pealing from the barracks as the troops hastily muster ; but it is finished. Adhem Beg has avenged the affront to his clan, and died as a hero.

An hour later merchants and buyers discuss the incident over cups of coffee and cigarettes.

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The Major's Story

"SO you are going back to Montenegro?" asked the Major as we sat on the deck of the *Pannonia* after dinner, steaming swiftly between the dim outlines of the myriad of islands and scogli that fringe Dalmatia's coast.

"You have been through part of Albania, I think you said?" he added as I answered his previous query in the affirmative.

"Yes," I replied. "I can't keep away from those countries."

The Major laughed. He was a big man and showed the traces of much hard service in the "Occupations-gebiet."

"It is easy for you to travel there as an Englishman," he said, "but for me it was a very different thing."

"You know the country too?" I asked in surprise. "When were you down there?"

"Oh, many years ago, on secret service. In fact, I went everywhere, and some of my experiences were decidedly unpleasant."

There was a general movement of deck chairs being drawn up a bit closer, and somebody offered the Major a cigar.

"You would like to hear one?" asked the Major as he took the proferred weed and lit it.

"Rather, Herr Major. Fire away," said I, voicing a chorus of acquiescence.

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The Major lay back in his chair and puffed meditatively for a few minutes.

"You know the Miriditi, I suppose?" he began, turning to me. I nodded. "Well, a quaint episode occurred to me there many years ago. There is no bloodshed or anything of that kind attached to the yarn. Fortunately I escaped all that sort of experience during my travels on this mission, otherwise I should not be here to-night. There are few people wounded when these beggars begin shooting, as I daresay you all know.

"I was travelling at the time on the confines of the Miriditi clan, one minute over their border, the next amongst the Turks, and I halted one evening with my guides, or rather escort, in a han perhaps three days' journey from Scutari. I was dog-tired too, for we had been going steadily all day over most villainous paths, and a certain amount of anxiety added to the strain. The men with me—they were Miriditi—were none too friendly, and had accompanied me more because my way was theirs than for any other reason.

"I entered the han, the ordinary hovel, one room, earthern floor, a few stools and rickety benches, and a wood fire burning in the middle. A lot of men were crowded inside, mostly crouching round the fire and talking. Two or three were men of Miriditi and the rest were hillmen of other clans, and a few Turks.

"My greeting was returned civilly enough, but as I sat and ate what little food I had still left, I noticed that the conversation, fairly loud and animated when I entered, dropped to desultory whispers. It was only too apparent that I was not welcome, and indeed I noticed one of my own men whisper a remark to one of the other Albanians, who

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passed it on, whereupon I was furtively looked at, and I began to feel uncomfortable. Naturally I disguised my feelings, and, calling for coffee, I squeezed into the ring around the fire and rolled myself a cigarette. When it was finished I waited, but no one offered me a light."

"A deuced bad sign," I remarked, well knowing the courtesy of these men in such respects at ordinary times.

"If I had been in doubt before as to the feelings of these men, I had none now," continued the Major. "I saw that they had something against me and that anything might happen. So I reached for the tongs, and, selecting a glowing ember, lit my cigarette with as much nonchalance as I could muster.

"A big clansman now got up from the other side of the ring and immediately a hush fell on the assembly, so sudden that the burning of the wood crackled like pistol shots in that uncanny silence. I can see that man now as he stalked round the room with all the swagger of an Albanian clansman, an insolent dare-devil expression on his cut-throat face, and his revolver—a huge silver-mounted weapon—sticking out suggestively from his bandolier of cartridges. The butt was turned outwards from his belt and carried as are all revolvers when the owner is in blood-feud or in a dangerous country. Usually, you know, it lies close against the body, under the leather flap of the weapon belt. He stopped deliberately behind me. I *felt* him standing there for I feigned an utter indifference to his movements, and then he spoke.

"'Give me a light, O stranger,' he said abruptly.

"I turned round as casually as possible and looked him up and down. He held an unlit cigarette in his right hand, the other was resting carelessly on his belt.

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"'There is the fire and there are the tongs,' I answered. 'Help thyself as even I have done.'

"Then I turned my back upon him and waited with a cold chill running down my spine.

"He muttered a curse, and suddenly all the squatting men rose with one accord, leaving me sitting there alone with the Albanian. I glanced quickly round the room, and the sight which met my eyes did not reassure me. The men of Miriditi, including my own men, were standing together, their backs against a wall, and facing them were the rest—the other clansmen and the Turks. None touched their weapons—every one feared to do that—and one by one they silently left the hut.

"In a few minutes I was left alone, with a presentiment that either a volley of bullets would be poured into the room the next second or that I should be shot down when I emerged.

"What did I do? Why, the only thing left me. I sat on, finished my coffee, rolled another cigarette and awaited developments. No man can travel in these lands without turning a thorough fatalist, and, as it happened, I did the right thing.

"Five, ten, it may have been thirty minutes later the big Albanian walked in alone, and sat down beside me.

"I had just prepared another cigarette when he, to my surprise, reached down and handed me a burning stick.

"I saluted and proffered my tobacco tin, which he gravely accepted. He smoked half the cigarette before he spoke."

"'Thou art an Austrian officer and a spy,' he said calmly, 'but thou art also a brave man. Come, I will be thy guide and will lead thee to a place of safety for this night. The others would kill thee, even as I would have

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done an hour ago. Only this must thou promise, that thou leavest this country at daybreak, else——' and he paused suggestively.

"Then he rose and, bidding me follow him closely, led me to another hut, where I was well received and slept the sleep of the just."

"Were you not afraid to trust yourself in his hands alone after that?" remarked a tourist as the Major called for a pint of wine.

"That shows you know nothing of the Albanians," remarked the Major somewhat shortly.

"Quite so," I added, and then the engine bells tinkled, and a few minutes later we were alongside the quay at Spalato.

"Let's spend the hour we are here in the Café Chantant," remarked the Major to me as he put down his empty glass with a sigh of contentment.

And I agreed.

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